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THE
WEDDING BELLS
OF GLENDALOUGH

MICHAEL EARLS

To Mother
from
Daniel

Dec. 25, 1913.

**THE WEDDING BELLS
OF GLENDALOUGH**

By the Same Author :

(Prose)

MELCHIOR OF BOSTON

STUORE

(Verse)

**THE ROAD BEYOND THE
TOWN**

THE WEDDING BELLS OF GLENDALOUGH

BY
MICHAEL EARLS, S. J.

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To
My Sister
Elizabeth

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THE WEDDING BELLS OF GLENDALOUGH

CHAPTER I

BEFORE THE STORM

A RUSTLE of leaves and a swaying of boughs on the maple-trees at the edge of the woods made Nora Gomez turn in that direction, as she stood with marked attentiveness on the porch of the quaint cottage.

It was early in the morning, and the very first day of August—that common-place month of summer, whose days, if a poet's word is convincing, cannot be so rare as those of June, days that are but a monotonous prolongation of July, and are tolerable to the *ennuyés* merely because they make the country or the seaside habitable up to the rapturous season of Indian summer.

Yet a delightful and invigorating freshness blew down the valley this morning, and lingered with its delicious odors and cool breath, among the firs and pines near the cottage.

The little Sudbury River that ran, or rather slipped along at the foot of the wooded hill, beamed with a thousand smiles, sparkling in the low rays of the sun, or hiding with laughter among the playful reeds at the marshy banks.

Nora—Miss Eleanora Gomez if you were formally introduced to her—was standing radiant before the simple panorama of woodland, valley, and river, breathing deep the rejuvenated air of morning, her eyes aglow as if in the presence of a scene of visible grace. Anticipating, as it seemed, some familiar voices above the gentle sough of the breeze, or the twitter of swallows skimming along the water, and the trilled, triple songs of the wood-robins among the lindens, Nora caught at last the expected sound—the swishing leaves and the swaying boughs at the border of the woods, and the guttural ejaculations of merry squirrels leaping along the trees.

To verify her sense of hearing, Nora glanced down from the porch, and in a few seconds she discovered the moving figures, the heads alert with susceptible expectations, and the bushy

tails waving up and down. Pet squirrels, in a certain sense, they were to Nora, and they had come up from a remote forest for their morning meal.

With apparent delight, and with the alacrity of a child going to play, she immediately went into the house, and quickly reappeared with a small bag of peanuts. Slowly then, and calling, "chuck, chuck, chuck" (her most proximate imitation of the squirrels' cries), she walked down the slope, slippery in places with its thick covering of pine needles, to the trees where her pensioners were waiting in apprehensive timidity.

Being in a mood to dole out her gifts in great leisure, Nora bestowed the peanuts with large intermissions, enjoying the while the antics of the poor animals as they darted about, every one of them a terrified alarmist, if she waved the paper bag, or attempted to approach a fixed circumference that they would not venture beyond.

Nora keenly enjoyed this half hour of diversion every morning. And whether it ap-

pears to a busier world a trifling occupation, and, therefore, indicative of a life that has both time and disposition to engage in useless pastimes (when a woman might be making lace, or, at another extreme, shrieking as a suffragette), yet this one daily incident in Nora's vacation months is by no means a signal of her mental tendencies or of purposes that occupy her will with all the force of character—that character which she possessed, as you shall see.

It will be sufficient to say of Nora here (though at times it borders on chivalry to be silent about a woman's age) that she is twenty-two years old; blonde, though Nora is a far remove from that fickleness which, in hackneyed romances, writers are wont to make concomitant with flaxen locks and fair eyes; and Nora's fair eyes looked out from thoughtful depths, as if they read messages from every passing scene in the light of some distant but undimmed eternity. Her face, to sum up the revelations that every line bespoke of inner sources, was predominantly one of kindness,

and of a serenity of soul that could not be shaken, however the clamors of elation or of grief might ruffle the surface for a few minutes. Nora was no mere theorist, directing her life with a set of empty formulas, those signposts, as Rouchefoucauld said, that point the way but do not go themselves. With that attractive manner and appearance which were hers, she preferred rather the principle that beauty is as beauty does. And at every incident, whether at school or at home, which advanced her in life, she whispered to herself and meant it, not as a mere picturesque phrase of foreign language and far-off palaces, "*No-blesse oblige*." Her conversation, as her letters, even from her early school-days at Kenhurst, had a distinguishing charm; but perhaps it was her skill in the art of listening, drawing out others to talk, and leading them into assured self-confidence by her silent nod or brief phrase, that showed at once the refinement of her own feelings and the discipline of her thoughts.

But we must not delay with Nora Gomez

longer than the half hour of playful delight she has just enjoyed with her pets. She has duties to attend to; commonplace, perhaps, they will seem; she may not have said of her any tiny portion of those uncommon things that are recounted of unreal people; and if Nora may not illustrate her history with such glories and disasters as came to great women in great events—the Scots' Mary and Marie Antoinette, for instance, of whom she knew from her school-days—she will, nobly and loyally as ever woman did, enact the little tragedy of her days. You may see that, as if in prophecy, written upon her face; and you should make the prophecy without hesitation if you were acquainted with Nora Gomez.

And now as she walked back towards the cottage, her habitual tendency to reflectiveness quickly asserted itself, and filled her mind with a consideration—one that had of late become food for her thoughts upon a certain subject dear to her heart.

Only two weeks ago, when Nora with her family group came out to this little rustic abode

in the woods near Lincoln, no squirrels were to be seen there. Margaret and Aileen, the two young sisters, were with Nora on the first expedition that went out to see what quadruped denizens the woods might have; and the bright treble voices had emphatically proclaimed the absence of squirrels. But Nora knew a scriptural saying—that the sparrow findeth a house for itself, and the turtle her nest where she may place her young ones; and with no very strenuous effort at deduction she concluded that a squirrel will search out his food even across mountains and valleys. She proved her assertion. She went down to the far border of the woods—a thin row of trees by a low stone wall leading off to a distant forest—and she inserted peanuts as high up as she could reach in the crevices of the trees. Three days later she saw that the feeding stations had been visited and emptied of their provisions. At the end of the week she had succeeded in alluring the squirrels towards the house, each day putting the toothsome morsels a space nearer the cottage. Every morning at six, and every

evening when a duty did not withdraw her from this playful occupation, she brought out a handful of nuts to the constant visitors.

It was a reflection born of this experience with the squirrels that now was quietly running in her thoughts. As she waved adieu to the still expectant rodents, and turned pensively back towards the slope, she caught into her thoughts a similarity—a symbolic parallel she called it—between this experience with the squirrels and a divine dealing that is a portion of many lives, indeed of every human life, if people would have it so.

“And there is One Who feeds our thoughts and leads on our hopes,” Nora was saying almost aloud, as she reached the porch. “He can direct our minds and wills across the mountains and valleys and bring us to His appointed places!”

Nora seated herself in a deep rustic chair and continued her meditation. She did not know that a friend very dear to her, through long years of family associations, was at that very moment, though at some distance from

Lincoln, musing over a similar thought.

Oliver Plunket, summering with his mother and sister at Manchester-by-the-Sea, went out early that morning and strolled leisurely along the "singing beach." In a canvas pouch he carried bits of bread and raw meat, not however with a view to make a breakfast for himself, for that was attended to before he set out; but for the pleasure he would have with some deep-sea fish; and he knew where to find them without leaving the shore.

He came to a high cliff, high, that is, for any portion of the "North Shore;" and there from a convenient seat he threw morsels of food into the deep water, and watched the various fishes come darting in and take their morning meal. Oliver enjoyed the pastime with keen delight; and though he had a heart and head that could engage seriously with the sternest realities of life, he had already so developed his character that he felt sure of the possession of that unique disposition of mind and will which finds it beneficial to play child at times. He knew and valued the character of the illus-

trious Thomas More, who could put aside the Chancellor's robes and play with his children in the grass.

Two weeks before, when Oliver first visited this rocky eminence, he could see only a school of minnows shooting hither and thither near the surface of the water. But coming after a few days with his little stock of edibles early in the morning, he could perceive the larger fish as they shot in from the deeper places. Rock-cod and smelt, and other fishes whose names he knew not, but whose habitats, he thought, were farther from the shore, waited there for him every morning.

And as he walked homeward to Tappanono, the little cottage where he was living that summer, he gave up his mind to a consideration that came to him from the recent scene at the cliff.

"The sparrow finds a house for itself," he said musingly; "and the heart of man will travel out of the ocean depths of dark difficulty and doubt to find its ideal, somewhere, but surely, bright in the sunlight."

Neither Nora nor Oliver, with their kindred thoughts, could prophesy so early in the morning that they both were to go forth that very day, behind their own fears and hopes, on and on, to obey a slight summons that was to speak at the door of their hearts. All in the course of a summer day, they were to write a great chapter in their lives; whether for weal or woe we shall not be able to ascertain before the sun goes down behind the terrible storm clouds in the darkness of the night-time.

And that same storm was to shake out the vials of its wrath upon the iniquitous head of one whom Nora and Oliver knew—Kenneth Shankee, in early days, one of their family friends, whose present life, with its catalogue of crime, was not even guessed at by the Gomez household or the Plunkets. And it was fortunate for the Gomez circle that the wrath of the storm made it impossible for Kenneth Shankee to hide his worthless carcass, as he thought to do, in their peaceful home that night. The history of a sacrilegious marriage and of a divorce equally blasphemous need not

detain us here; for apart from the tempest that rages in the outer world, there are two confident souls, even though a possible shadow falls athwart their vocations. Tragical to them was that day in its issues; and for that reason do we tarry over it, before we speed away to other days and the wedding bells at Glendalough.

CHAPTER II

TWO HEARTS AS ONE

TO make of the mind a high court of inquiry on a question that must decide the weal or woe of a lifetime, and then summon forth all the energy of the will to a contract that must stand unshaken till death—such a procedure will make any young person pause, however intrepid and dispassionate he may be when he goes to face the ordeal. For such a period of mental and moral endeavor he will need the help of circumstances the most favorable; solitude, if he finds it advantageous, or companionship with others in those cases where two heads are better than one. And again, the very weather, trifling as it may appear to be in affecting such hours of deliberation, will oftentimes become a potent factor in the tremendous calculations; for there are some problems of the mind that may be best worked out in the seclusion of a dark room,

the blinds drawn to keep out all distracting appeals to the bodily eye. And there are other moods of mind and heart which will benefit best by being aired out in the open sunlight, near gardens of flowers, and close to the merry singing of birds and the joyous laughter of children. Nature has its salutary remedies for the discipline of man's natural faculties; while for the development of his supernatural character, and for his advance to life eternal, he must depend absolutely on the help of One Who said, "Without Me you can do nothing."

In such a mental inquiry, and upon a decision that was to cast its sunlight or its shadow over their lives and the lives of others as well, were two young persons engaged: Eleonora Gomez and Oliver Plunket. It was a sultry afternoon in midsummer when they went forth to hear the final answer to their great problem; one that for three years or more, with untiring persistence, had made itself audible at the doorways of their thoughts and affections. Now, not entirely without misgiving, would they open wide the door, and say, should

it be with glad decisiveness, "Welcome," or with painful reluctance, "Begone."

The intense heat of the day begetting, as such a weather condition is wont to do, an inert lassitude of mind and will, could hardly be, we imagine, an inviting circumstance to court the best response. A sultry noon hour, even if it be under the fragrant shelter of a pine forest or by the cool, whispering waves of a mountain lake, or at the open sweep of the sea, will rarely allow the spirit to exert its best impulses. Vacation moods, except they be in solitude, will not prompt the heart to follow those "better things," seen and approved in a clearer hour. At the refreshing oases among the wooded mountains in the daytime, or by the solemn majesty of the ocean at night, where wealth and leisure build their caravansaries for a few short months, some trivial talk may rise up about the things of trade and politics; or, among the younger people, to whom the giddy air seems redolent with the breath of love, the ephemeral feelings of youth and romance may inspire an hour for the light gallantries of

speech. But to deal seriously with these topics—of trade, of politics, of love—is almost a fruitless endeavor during these days of recreation; their forum and their proper council-chamber are to be found in the more invigorating temperature and environment of other seasons.

Yet, as with Nora and Oliver, the problems of life will stand for answer in difficult places at times—the Spirit bloweth when and where It listeth. We may have set our faces in anger toward some Damascus of our own, and lo! the Voice, “Why persecutest thou Me?” We have heard the summons a thousand times, “*Tolle, lege,*” though in an undramatic way; and our free response to it—for it constrains us not against our will—is what endows us at this very moment with the highest gifts we possess, or failing to have answered aright, do not possess.

Such then (with due apologies to that over trite topic, the weather) were the out-of-door conditions, when Nora Gomez and Oliver Plunket, with a similar problem set seriously in

their hearts, went forth from the cool shelter of their vacation abodes, out into the depressing heat of the breezeless, stifling city atmosphere to find the answer. They would bring their cause to a hearing before the constituted tribunal of their choice. From different points of departure (and how slight a hint to start them was a newspaper item that morning!) they took, in great part, a common pathway, after they reached the North Station; over the sweltering heat of the city car-tracks, through the oven-like atmosphere of the subway, out to one of the hills west of Boston, high above Beacon Street, where the majestic tower and graceful buildings of Glendalough College looked down upon the picturesque lakes in the spacious lowlands. The dull languor of the August afternoon was not the proper medium to make that vista the thing of beauty that it was indeed at all seasons of the year; and the unrelated emotions of the two young visitors could not lend inspiration to their eyes as they glanced towards the well known panorama. They had stood there in happier moods and

with brighter feelings, observed every feature of the landscape; and after a long term of anxiety, and of issues not even remotely guessed at on this sultry summer day, they were to enjoy the scene again in great delight, and hear the music of bells at Glendalough, as they moved away.

CHAPTER III

HIBERNIOR HIBERNIS

NORA's father, Mr. Henriquez Gomez, at the close of the Civil War, came to Boston from his father's home near Salamanca in Spain. He had been invited by the new Spanish consul in Boston to try his fortune in the north; otherwise, he might have set his eyes, as many of his countrymen did, towards the southern half of the Americas. And at the consul's office Henriquez Gomez worked for three years, finding time during that period to conduct classes in the Spanish language, in a fashionable school near Beacon Hill. Then he opened a small salesroom on Winter Street, dealing in various kinds of Spanish and North African merchandise. The nature of his business was partly the cause of his acquaintance with many of the most distinguished people of Boston; for it was a day when success in business could win admission to certain circles as

easily as in this, our day, one's prominence in some branch of art or science is the open sesame. Mr. Gomez had, moreover, those qualities that mark Spanish gentlemen: a bearing that spoke honor and courtesy at all times, a cosmopolitan sense that enabled him to comport himself in any honorable environment as one at home; and, finally, he had a keen interest in the best affairs of life and art, having a wider reading in universal history and in general literature than men who posed about him with Athenian airs.

But his life of more intimate friendship was lived in other spheres than those of trade and civic associations. "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," he used to say as he glanced in upon his own absorbed mind during hours of business; yet early in the morning, at the very outset of each day, he made sure to fasten before his eyes other words into the inscription, as if for a rule of life—"and to God the things that are God's." He was, therefore, as he himself once put it, "a Catholic first, and all things else came a long way behind." A

quick spirit of faith he had brought with him from Spain, and he lost none of it in the hard and pressing demands of the business and political world. The culture of mind and the erudition which he had acquired at home near the historic University of Salamanca accentuated his devotion towards the things of the Faith, and he might have said, accommodating to himself a famous dictum of Pasteur, "I have the faith of a Spanish peasant; if I had greater learning in the arts and sciences, I should have the faith of the Spanish peasant's wife."

It was due in part to his acquaintance with the traditions of Salamanca that he came to pass his social life among some Irish families living at the North End of Boston; for he had stored his mind in historical readings with facts concerning the exiled Irish scholars and students of Spain, men who had to leave their native island during the bitter penal times and build shrines of learning in foreign lands. Irish names were prominent upon the rolls of Salamanca. And when Mr. Henriquez Gomez became acquainted with the family of

Honor Rogers—an unpretending little family it was, in the North End, but a home that possessed in ancestral traditions more that was really illustrious than any reputed son of the Pilgrim Fathers could lay claim to—he had a store of Irish sayings and of bits of Irish lore that he learned before he had left the environs of Salamanca.

“How queer enough is the coincidence,” said Honor’s father to him one evening, early in the courtship; “you have so many Gaelic phrases and so many portions of our old songs. And at home in a little village near Mullingar, that was next to ours in Ireland, I often heard the children speaking Spanish. They had learned it from their kinsfolk who went to seek fortune in South America.”

And on an evening, one of those kindly evenings in an Irish household, when the neighbors enter to deep-hearted hospitality, each of the guests contributing in an informal way some rann or rhyme or story out of their limitless fund, Mr. Gomez, much to the surprise of his dear friends, volunteered in his gracious,

Spanish way to recite an old Irish ballad that he recently learned, knowing that such an achievement on his part would please Honor. Years afterward he used to repeat the ballad to his little children, looking at the mother the while, to recall the occasion when he first rendered it; and that same ballad was a favorite recitation of his children in their own little entertainments.

"I read this from one of my Irish books the other day," he said, as he moved over towards the piano, wanting something to rest his hand upon during this novel performance. "And," he added, "a note informed me that the ballad is centuries old, and the words were recently taken down from an old singer named Rogers, in Mayo;" and he smiled, glancing towards Honor as he repeated the family name. Then he spoke the lines in a soft, musical, Spanish voice—the beautiful ballad from an old Irish source:

"Holy was good Saint Joseph
When marrying Mary Mother,
Surely his lot was happy,
Happy beyond all other.

Refusing red gold laid down,
And the crown by David worn,
With Mary to be abiding
And guiding her steps forlorn."

This and other versions of old Gaelic songs you might hear from him on any of the evenings at the home of Honor Rogers, and in later years in his own home among his children and in assemblies of friends. He had snatches of old ballads that told of the Irish Brigade on the continent and stories from those imperishable Gaelic legends that had gone into Spanish literature.

"And your great Shakespeare loved Irish music," he said one evening, as he stepped towards Honor at the piano. "Perhaps you know that in the play of Henry V, when Pistol says to a French soldier, '*Callino, castore me!*' it is a reference of Shakespeare to an old Irish air called 'Colleen Oge Asthore.'" And thereupon Henriquez hummed the air, while Honor played as best she could in an impromptu way the chords upon the piano.

But we have said enough upon a point that

bears on the period of courtship of Nora's father and mother, sufficient to explain how Henriquez Gomez so easily became a favorite at the home of John Rogers, and how in good time, he won the heart and hand of Honor. Irish customs and Irish song had captivated him as in centuries past they had won to their loyal love the invading Dane and Norman, making them, as history has confessed, "more Irish than the Irish." And it is not without some interest to know that while the Puritan descendants in Boston were entertaining in an elaborate and effusive way the literary heroes of the hour, there was many an humble household in that very city endeavoring to perpetuate a nation's birthright in song and music, fostering that Irish love of great traditions which exile and the rack and ruin of persecution could not destroy.

And as in the case of countless families of Irish exiles throughout the world, this love of the old religious and national traditions was perpetuated with full vigor in the Gomez household. When Honor married Henriquez

they went to live in the South End, renting a house that stood near a picturesque park on Massachusetts Avenue. Still devoted to Irish names that he had heard at Salamanca, Mr. Gomez called his first child Diarmid; and when the mother at the advent of the next child whispered to him to give a Spanish name, he was ready with his own answer, in a gentle whisper, "Well, the Spaniards like names out of the abstract; for instance, Honor is a name."

"But your own mother's name," said Honor, as the nurse took up the child, going to have it baptized.

"Yes, yes, mother's name, Eleanora," he replied with a smile, and he leaned forward to kiss his wife; "we'll call her Eleanora, and the diminutive of that is Nora, as we used to call you." He lifted Diarmid and kissed him, and went out with the little party to the church.

Then came the other children: Fergil, who died at the age of five; Gerald, who was, at the time of this chronicle, a novice in a Religious Order; Eleanora, and the two little sisters who were now her constant companions, Margaret

and Aileen. Margaret was only three years old when the mother died; and two years later, at the father's death, the children were left to the loving solicitude of Nora and Diarmid.

Graduating from Glendalough the year of his father's death, Diarmid straightway took charge of the business that his father had established. Nora was just completing her course at Kenhurst, and to her especially fell the care of the two younger children. With complete devotion she played a mother's part, earnest as her own mother had been, yet vivacious with a joy that her heroic heart could bring to every task. Nor did she grow timorous at the augmented responsibility which came to her, when, as soon as the home affairs were in a comfortable way, Diarmid married Molly Keyes, a former schoolmate of Nora's at Kenhurst, though in advance of her by two classes.

The responsibility arising from her motherly care of the young sisters very naturally withdrew Nora from any social enjoyments that might otherwise have come to her. She still held in affectionate regard the dear friends of

her convent days, Clare Plunket in particular, who had been her boon companion in early childhood days and during the years at the convent. But by degrees Nora came to stay apart from the activities of her little social world, careful, however, to show that attention to the interests of her friends which had marked her conduct in earlier and more prosperous years. With Clare Plunket she kept an active friendship, writing to her very frequently, when Clare went away from the city with her mother. And it is to hint at the close bond of love between these two girls to say that when Nora had made one of the most intimate acknowledgments to her dearest friend, on a point that concerned Nora's future, Clare quickly and generously said to her, "And why will you not let Margaret and Aileen come to live with mother and me? Ollie goes to room again at Glendalough. But mother will not miss him, especially if those two darlings come with the cheerful sunshine of their company. And, Nora dear—Noreen, as Mother Oakley used to call you—Noreen, I say, we would make them happy here, and leave

you to all that your heart calls you to."

"It is just like you, Clare; I will think about that," Nora replied. "And where else could I wish to leave Margie and Aileen than with my mother's dearest friend, your mother, Clare, and with you and Oliver. But—" and she changed the topic at once.

The boundaries of Nora's care reached farther than the welfare of her little sisters for one or even two years. She felt that she had to stand mother to them till they should come near to womanhood. Then—but then would it not be too late to give her own life its ultimate direction?—she could leave them to Diarmid and Molly. And she was wise enough to know that Clare Plunket with all her loving friendship must live her own life, and even with the best intentions find but little time to attend to her protégées. Shane Desmond, once a classmate of Diarmid's at Glendalough, and now a prominent personage in a large publishing house in Boston, was a frequent caller at Clare Plunket's house. And Nora could easily surmise, from hints in Clare's letters, that

certain roads were going to meet perhaps before another springtime came round.

"It will be lonesome for Oliver," Nora whispered as she put down her last letter from Clare. Early in May was it written, when Clare was starting for the west with her mother.

Oliver had enclosed a note which said, "Dear Nora;—Clare tells me that I must come in often to see you and Margie and Aileen. And I will, though we are about to face the crowded work at the end of the school year. And so I promise you I will come as often as I can."

May and June came, and took their silent places with the past; so did July. Here now, at the beginning of August, Nora Gomez and Oliver Plunket were drawing near to a well-known terminus, so near, indeed, yet what worlds between them in that little time and space! And yet again that happy accident of a little distance will affect their destinies before another August comes round, and they have taken a long farewell of Glendalough and of all the old associations.

CHAPTER IV

THE EMBASSY

THE little cottage that the Gomez family took for the summer on a pine-covered knoll, near the placid Sudbury River two miles west of the village of Lincoln, was in good earnest a secluded place; and for that reason principally it was chosen as a vacation-home this year. Nora, however, did not force her desire of solitude too insistingly upon her brother; she did not wish to withhold Molly and Diarmid from the brighter and more engaging environment that could be found elsewhere.

But Diarmid when he went out to inspect the place was at once attracted to it. The railroad station was only two miles away; he could therefore attend to his business in Boston without great inconvenience. At one of the neighboring farmhouses he hired a horse and carriage for the summer and kept them in the little barn at the foot of the knoll; then he rented a motor-

boat, that was to give the party many expeditions on the river, and take them quite near to the church in Concord on Sundays. He taught Nora and Molly, and even Kate, their servant, how to manage the boat whenever he should be absent.

In the middle of July they closed their city house, and went out to the delightful country.

"We'll see Indians," whispered Margaret to Aileen, as the carry-all drove into the deep shadows of the pines.

"You are Pocahontas, you know," said Aileen to Nora, alluding to the Indian play-names which they used at times at home with their circle of friends.

"And you are Algonquin, dear," answered Nora, waving a feather. In the days that followed many a half hour was given to "play Indian."

"Pocahontas! Pocahontas!" shouted the two children as they rushed out to the porch on that August morning. Nora sat musing in the deep rustic chair after breakfasting the squirrels.

"Good morning, braves," Nora answered, clasping her little sisters and making them fast in her arms. "Prisoners so early!" she shook her head and laughed. "Two scalps already!"

"And have you had council with the Great Chief this morning?" she asked as she released the two heads.

"Yes, Nora," answered Kate who had come to the door to announce breakfast, and who understood the import of the question; "I went over their prayers with them a while ago."

"And we shall come into the wigwam immediately, Kate," said Nora, rising and taking the little hands that reached for hers.

"Where are the other palefaces?" asked Aileen, peering away towards the woods and then to the boat-landing.

"Why, dear, Diarmid wanted to go to town early this morning, so that he may return early in the afternoon and take us up the river, and Molly has driven to the station with him."

It was fully a half hour after breakfast before Molly returned from the station. She brought the morning mail with her and the

daily papers. Nora with the big Newfoundland dog had just come up the hill, having left the two children with fishing rods on the bank of the river.

Finding no letter for her, Nora took the newspaper and ran her eye over the table of contents. Some item of importance caught her attention almost immediately. A slight cry of surprise started from her lips, but she quickly suppressed it when Molly turned with a look of inquiry. Nora withdrew quietly toward a secluded seat at the north of the house, and then swung open the pages of the paper to find the news that had aroused her interest.

The paragraph contained the names of the faculty of Glendalough for the coming year. It was customary at the college to make this announcement on the last day of July, which was the feast of St. Ignatius.

Nora found, as she scanned the list, one name that was particularly dear to her. She said nothing about this news to Molly a few minutes later while they were both walking towards the river. But as noon drew near she

called Margaret and Aileen to her side and led them towards a bit of grassy lawn behind the lilac bushes, playfully going on tiptoe as if they were starting upon an Indian warpath.

"A big secret!" whispered Nora, as they fell behind the secluding bushes.

"Oo, oo!" said Aileen with pursed lips, her forefinger on them, pretending that there was some mystery ahead.

"Hush," whispered Margaret with a pert toss of her head, and waving her hand for silence up at the rustling leaves.

A gentle sough of breeze went through the pines; and all three listened for a while and broke forth into a merry laugh.

"Well, this is the secret, Margie dear," Nora said, in quite a solemn manner, opening wide her kindly eyes, "and you too, Aileen, this is the little, tiny secret."

She put an arm about the two little heads, with their upturned wondering eyes, and went on, "I must go to Boston this afternoon, immediately after lunch—a little business that I must attend to at Glendalough."

The children waited to hear more. Nora was smiling at their apparent inquisitiveness; but she did not have a merry heart behind her thoughts or feelings. She knew, or at least she surmised what that visit at Glendalough was going to mean to her; a secret she had kept to herself these past weeks, while a resolve was forming in her heart. And it was to cover her own fears at that moment that Nora pressed the heads close to her, though she did not let them know that she was clinging to them for consolation, nor that it was the purpose of their welfare that brought a touch of grief to her heart at that moment.

Aileen, in wonderment looked up, asking, "Glendalough? Is that Dermie's school? Is he going with you?"

"No, dear," she answered, "Diarmid will come home and take you up the river." And noticing a cast of sorrow that came over the young faces, Nora added, "I'll don the seven-league boots and be there and home again before you count eleventeen hundred and fourteen. I will return directly the business is

done, just as soon as the—the—” and she shook her head for some word, “the embassy is ended.”

“The embassy?” queried Margaret in full surprise.

“We’ll call it that, dear,” Nora answered, and stroked the upturned forehead. And as the word suggested a thought to her, she added, “I am going to see an ambassador of the King.”

This last statement heightened the mystery to the young listeners. Nora was quick to perceive that, and she gave her message in simpler words, and then added, “And some day, I’ll tell Margie and Aileen what the embassy was all about—some day, some day.” She hid her face from the inquiring eyes.

Quickly she stood up at these last words, clapping her hands as if in applause, bravely concealing from the children the emotions that entered by the door of sorrow into her heart.

“I am going to town this afternoon, Molly,” Nora called out, in a very calm tone, “out to Glendalough. We are calling it an embassy to Glendalough.”

The three sisters posed for a moment in military manner and saluted Molly.

And at that very moment, far away in the cottage at Manchester a similar statement was being made by Oliver Plunket. He was coming up the little lawn before Tappanono, waving his hand to his mother, who sat reading in the shade of the veranda.

"I must go to town immediately after lunch, Mother," Oliver said, when he reached the steps.

"But Shane Desmond is to call here this afternoon," the mother answered, pointing to a letter that Clare had brought to her.

"And you and Clare will make up for my unnoticed absence," he said with a little laugh. And leaning over his mother's chair, till his lips were close to her ear, he whispered, "I am going on a little mission to Glendalough."

"On so hot a day, dear?" the mother queried, looking up. "And then Shane Desmond—how will he be entertained, if you are away?"

Oliver smiled and winked, then raised his hand and pointed with his forefinger as with

a child's gesture; "He will have lots of fun taking care of you, while I am in town. Isn't that so, Clare?" he called out to his sister, who was approaching. "But, Mother dear," he went on, as he took a chair by her side and pretended to plead with a serious look, "I shall be there and back again before Clare has told Shane one-half of one-fourth about your trip out west."

And lunch followed shortly and Oliver managed to go through it without revealing to his mother anything about the purpose he had in mind in going to Glendalough that day. Once or twice he thought to give a hint at it, but he kept the secret to himself. And as they arose from table, Oliver took his hat immediately, and went over to kiss his mother, and then Clare, saying as he stepped out to the veranda, "You certainly have neglected Nora Gomez of late, not a single word have you sent to her since you returned." He shook his head in kindly reprehension.

"But you—haven't you written to her or seen her while we were away?" asked Clare.

She walked down the lawn taking her brother's arm, and with a tone of regretfulness, saying, "Ollie, it is a shame that we have not had Nora down with us here. Do keep your eyes open. Why," and Clare's voice brightened, "you may see her at the North Station. And do prevail on her to come here with the children for the month of August."

"I'll step in to see Diarmid if I have time," Oliver answered. He heard the whistle of the approaching train; and waving again to his mother, he ran down the road to the station.

And it is no matter for wonderment that Nora Gomez coming that same minute into the station at Lincoln was thinking of her former schoolmate and friend, and saying to herself, as she deposited the big Newfoundland dog, her companion along the road, with the station-master, "I wonder where the Plunkets have gone for the summer. Clare has not written to me since she left Denver in June. And Oliver—" Nora could not complete the remark about Oliver. She had to step forward briskly, for the train with its sputtering and

hissing engine, and the creaking and the whistling of the brakes, came up to the station, a picture of restless excitement.

Two minutes later Nora Gomez was being sped towards the North Station, and Oliver Plunket was hurrying to the same terminal on his train from Manchester.

CHAPTER VI

A BIT OF LOGIC

WHEN Diarmid Gomez returned to Lincoln early that afternoon and was told that Nora had gone to Boston—Molly saluted him with that message, as he approached the carriage at the station—he stood for a few moments in silence by the horse, and plainly showed surprise at the news. What could be so startling or absorbing about this ordinary occurrence Molly could not understand (for Nora usually went to town twice a week), and Molly made that her first remark as Diarmid stepped into the carriage and took the reins.

“Why simply because I guessed it would be so, as I came out on the train,” he answered, his contracting brow showing a feeling of worry. Then he did not speak until he had driven his carriage safely through the disordered group of vehicles in the station yard.

When he came out on the long, sandy road,

looking ahead to the winding fences and walls, and the horse was settled into its steady jog, Diarmid's brow undid its knitted lines and smoothed out to its normal tranquillity, and his voice assumed its natural tone. "I think I saw Oliver Plunket at the North Station. He was coming up the opposite platform—it looked like Oliver and I tried to reach him, but I lost him in the crowd at the gate, and my train was ready to start."

"Oh, what a pity!" exclaimed Molly; "I wish you had spoken with him, for Nora was talking of him this morning, and we wanted news of the family. You didn't see Nora, did you?" she asked with sudden emphasis; "she must have reached the North Station just as you were taking your train."

Diarmid merely shook his head for his negative reply. Again he looked on in silence down the road with its patches of shade under the occasional trees. On his face, as Molly could easily see in a slight side glance, fell a shadow that came from some source of anxiety. His eyelids blinked in rapid succession. And

Molly was quick to perceive that this muscular perturbation was not due to sharp sunlight or a whiteness of the road; for the sun was just now behind a cloud—the first of a gathering group blowing up from the hot, dull west—and the road at that point was made of dull brown clay.

“Do you know, Molly,” he said as he touched the horse with the whip and pulled at the reins—a bit of physical exercise to shake himself out of his little reverie; “I have been thinking that Nora has some worry or other on her mind. She does not let it appear so when we are about, or the children; but I have sighted the thing more than once, it seems to me.”

Molly’s only answer was a look of real surprise. She took the whip from her husband’s hand and cut at the low bushes that ran along the road, the cracking sound of the whip making no difference to the jogging horse. Sympathetic vibration could not spur on that horse.

“I hardly think Nora worries,” she said finally, yet with some hesitation and a tentativeness of tone, suggesting that perhaps she

had something else to say about Nora's state of mind.

"But you must have noticed that Nora is not the Nora she used to be—some of her light-heartedness has gone; she gets away by herself, even though Lincoln is solitary enough without effort. And you know she goes down to the woods by the river or out these roads often by herself, and looks as if she had been crying when she comes back."

"Crying!" Molly spoke so loudly that the horse pricked up his ears and pretended he was going to run. "Why, Derm, you know that it would have to be terrible suffering to make Nora cry. And she has too much strength of character to let worry eat at her heart; perhaps I should term it common sense, or as writers put it when talk is about women of that kind in books, I might say that she is brave and plucky and a dozen other words. Nora is too brave to let a little difficulty cast her down."

"Difficulty?" interrogated Diarmid. "So there is some trouble, some difficulty?" He reined in the horse, which was only too willing

to stand in the shade. Diarmid was too solicitous about his sister to let any rumor of trouble to her go unchallenged.

"Why, I mean, Derm," Molly went on, trying to generalize her remarks—for with a woman's keen eye on another woman, she had read something out of Nora's heart—"I simply mean that if Nora had some plan—some plan that she wanted to follow, and a difficulty should arise, why Nora would use two powers that you know she possesses—her strong, patient, gentle character, and her confidence in God; and in a short time she would walk right over the difficulty, even if it were a mountain, and come down happy into the valley on the other side." Molly smiled, and added a light little laugh at her speech, then touched the horse with the whip, saying as it started off to its machine-like trot, "What did the good nuns at Kenhurst bother with us for, if they could not teach a girl to conquer difficulties?"

But Diarmid did not give a bow of reassurance or signify by silence that he acquiesced to Molly's conclusions. "A plan to do some-

thing? Um!" he said, shaking his head as if he had a clue. "Yes, I think I come to the thing. Nora may have had a plan? I think I see it."

"See what?" asked Molly with that look and tone every one knows how to use when challenging a correct guess.

"This, for instance," began Diarmid, with slow syllables. "Nora may have had the convent life in mind. She never told me in so many words, but people can guess; minds may arrive at logical conclusions. Now I noticed in to-day's paper that dear old Father Campion is at Glendalough for the coming year. Nora has gone to Glendalough. Father Campion gave you both a retreat once at Kenhurst. Nora has often spoken about that retreat. Father Campion has often written to Nora."

Molly broke into a hearty laugh at this preamble of argument from her husband. She turned and put her hand over his mouth. "What logic!" she cried out, and laughed again. "What logic! Father Campion gave Nora a retreat; Father Campion wrote to

Nora: therefore, Nora wants to enter a convent." Another laugh, and the hand again placed over Diarmid's mouth to silence his protest. "But Father Campion gave me a retreat, and Father Campion wrote to me many, many times after that; and one day I went to see Father Campion, yes, and many times I went and he did not send me to a convent, but he told me to get married to somebody that I had spoken about." And she put up her hand again to signify that she had not yet ended her speech. "And Father Campion may give the very same advice to Nora this very afternoon if there is some nice young man worthy of her. And who knows but she will come back to tell us to be ready to hear the wedding bells. And that's the end of it." Molly bowed as if she were ending an oration on a platform.

Diarmid pretended to be satisfied, but he had still his own thoughts, though he did not speak. He struck the reins across the horse's back and turned in from the road to the little drive that led up to their cottage. Above the

crunching of the wheels in the shining sand, he called out the familiar "Ho-lo!" to the children at the cottage.

Margaret and Aileen quickly appeared at the head of the drive, waving clusters of iris blossoms and gladiolus leaves that they had gathered with Kate near the river. Then they put their heads together and made up a salutation which rang out from their laughing treble voices:

"One, two, three, lunch for we,
Molly and Diarmid, what kept thee?"

Molly waved back to them, with her own impromptu rhyme:

"Four, five, six and seven and eight,
We'll have our lunch though the horse is late."

"Your turn now, Derm," called out little Aileen. "Say a rhyme."

Diarmid merely waved the reins, though he tried to look pleasantly towards the expectant children, "Let Margie say one for me," he answered as he jumped to the ground, and caught their outstretched hands. He helped Molly

out of the carriage and turning the horse towards the stable he said to Kate, "I'll be ready for lunch in a few minutes."

His thoughts, while he was gone, did not get away from the solicitude he felt for Nora. "If it is the convent, if that is what Nora has in mind, why doesn't she let us know?" he said to himself, even though he was not absolutely sure that his question was the right one.

Truth was, however, that Diarmid had hit upon the right track. The convent, a life in the cloister, was Nora's vocation, as her best mind and will had determined. Yet open-minded, as she was always to her loving ones at home, she kept this secret to herself. Had her father or mother been alive she would have gone straight to them and spoken of the life that had so strongly appealed to her. But when she was left, a mother as it were, to Margaret and Aileen, she bravely and even joyously took the duty that death bequeathed to her devotion. Diarmid, the anxious and loyal brother that he was, would willingly have the two children come to live with himself and

Molly. Nora knew that; but she wanted even greater assurance for the continued welfare of her two darlings. Diarmid and Molly, after all, would be living in a world apart; their best intentions might be diminished by a good fraction as the years went on. They should have their own life to lead, their own plans and hopes and interests to consider, things that would perhaps, in time, absorb all their attention. Margie and Aileen might fall to the level of mere visitors in the household, or, at most, they would be well-treated guests. But love and devotion and the full care of their education—what if these should fail them? No; Nora would stay and give their young years the nearest thing to a mother's love. She would make that her vocation, since God wanted it. And the convent! There was the source of that pain that had been behind her thoughts these past weeks. That was what caused her to appear less lighthearted, that had made her, as Diarmid conjectured, look worried, and but a shadow of her own radiant self.

Nora had realized that it would take almost

six years of her life, six of those precious years, to see Margaret and Aileen across the waters of youth to the shores of womanhood. "But God has willed it," she said; "I will stay with them."

And during the days at Lincoln—for previously to this summer, she had clung to her strong hope concerning the convent—Nora began to reconcile herself to the life that lay before her. The little bank account belonging to herself and her sisters must be economically though not parsimoniously managed, so that the children might have a good portion when they grew up.

"Father Campion must know that I have to give up the convent," she had said to herself one evening at Lincoln. Now she was on her way to tell him. That was the business of the so-called embassy, though Diarmid alone of the household had even faintly guessed at it. Even Molly, with her own keen mind, did not surmise it, albeit she readily realized that it must be an important desire for advice or consolation that allured Nora to go far from home on a day so uncongenial for traveling.

CHAPTER VI

A PROPHECY NOT INFALLIBLE

WHEN Oliver Plunket was a baby in his mother's arms, over twenty years before he became a "senior" at Glendalough, a statement was made in his regard that was of the nature of a prophecy—a prediction in a general sense it surely was. The words fell solemnly from the lips of a young zealous priest in a very striking circumstance, doubtless out of an earnest heart, and after a fervent prayer from the very depths of his soul.

Oliver's mother, to whom this remarkable utterance was addressed, must have been deeply moved thereat, even though she quickly realized that such a prediction could not, and indeed must not force her into the unshakeable assent of faith. She knew full well, not as a theologian, but as a person possessed of Catholic instinct and training, that only a divine revela-

tion can command such an act of faith—no merely probable knowledge of the divine origin of the utterance being sufficient, as the Jansenists held, nor that subjective apprehension of it such as the pseudo-mystics contended who brought anathema upon their error.

While, therefore, Mrs. Plunket might not hold that consoling utterance with the surety of faith, such as she should have for divine revelation, she did not hesitate to keep it in the full vigor of ardent hope. In the shrine of her prayerful heart she might sigh for it and expect its fulfilment in due time.

During all the years of Oliver's boyhood she kept it secret, kept in her motherly heart the priest's prophecy and all the circumstances that attended it, telling it not even to her husband, and least of all to Oliver, lest, when he should come to choose his life-work, the story of that memorable day might exert an unnecessary influence or perhaps meet with a regretful repudiation from him.

It was not till he announced his decision about the profession he was going to enter upon

that the patient mother related the story. Now that his mind had been made up, the prophecy might be told, when, as she added, she had good grounds for asserting that the priest's words would not come true.

"I will tell you a little story, Ollie," she said that night as he sat near her to relate the determination he had reached. He was almost entirely recovered from an accident in a recent football game and was on the eve of his last half year at Glendalough.

Mrs. Plunket had brought forth her work-box of needles and diverse threads to have something at hand to steady her narrative when it touched on points deep enough for emotions. Pauses would come, she anticipated, and tears perhaps that would gleam with the light of far-off memory and patient hope.

"You were a mere baby when it happened, Ollie," was the prelude, in slow syllables. "Clare was able to walk about, and had gone down to the village with your father."

"Oh, Brookville, you mean, where we used to live?" said Oliver, feigning a look of dis-

appointment. "I thought that you were going to start at Bagdad or at a fairy hill in old Donegal, or perhaps," and his face and tone were alight with vivacity, "at Salamanca where Nora's father used to live. Do start there," he added, suddenly subduing his manner, and drawing his head down to his shoulders as a child might do in preparation for a ghost story.

"Yes, dear, it was in Brookville," the mother resumed in her quiet tone. "You will not be able to remember a year when our most intimate visitor was poverty."

"By an' by hard times come a knockin' at the do'," Oliver in a playful mood began to hum an old refrain; but he quickly perceived the incongruity of indulging in levity while his mother was relating a pathetic chapter in the family history. He lifted his wounded foot to a comfortable angle of repose, and bowed to his mother to signify that he would interrupt no more.

"Hard times, indeed they were, Ollie," she went on, "and a pitiable year it must have been for many families in Brookville. The fac-

tories were at their worst, working but a day or two each week. Your own father had not succeeded in establishing a satisfactory foothold for the little weekly journal that he started there. And then to that struggle was added the terrible sickness which came to him, the rheumatism that crippled him for a year."

"And no pension at that time, Mother?" asked Oliver.

"Yes, a pension he got, but a small one, and very small indeed against all the expenses that we had to meet. Clare and you had to live, you know; and father's expensive attempt at journalism, and the long medical treatment,—these made the little pension disappear like snow in the sun."

"But how did you ever manage?" Oliver asked in the pause.

"Why, we had a few pennies gathered in brighter days," she answered, "a few pennies for the rainy day."

"And like Saint Theresa," Oliver had to smile, as he leaned forward to give a bit of erudition, speaking rapidly to abbreviate the

time for his inserted remarks, "Like Saint Theresa—I think it was Father Campion who told us that she went out one day to engage in some great work, though she had only a few pence, or whatever the Spaniards call them, in her purse, and she said with full confidence, 'Theresa and a few coins cannot do much, but Theresa and the little pennies and God can achieve wonders.' "

Mrs. Plunket, her head nodding assent to Oliver's interjection, went on: "Yes, we had to trust in God through all that disheartening outlook, I assure you. But," as she pretended to add emphasis to her words by suddenly arousing her needles from their indifferent activity, "I must come to the incident that I want you to know about." And the narrative proceeded with animation.

"It happened on a very sultry afternoon in August. Our young priest, Father Coleman, who came to Brookville in May, announced that he would begin to collect funds for the new church, and he appointed the times for the different sections of the parish, when he would

come in person to receive the contributions, making his visit, as he said, serve as an opportunity to become acquainted with all of his people. The men of the parish were to meet in the evening to dig the foundation for the church.

“Well, that warm afternoon in August, he came to our little street for what offerings he might get. Most of the people in our neighborhood were in difficult straits because of the slack work in the factories. We were in even greater difficulties, for at least they had good health and might look for more prosperous times in the shops.

“Your father had gone out with Clare by the time Father Coleman arrived at our house. You were asleep in my arms, as I went to the door. I shall never forget that look upon the good priest’s face as he stepped out of the hot sun into the hallway. Great drops of perspiration were on his forehead, and tears were in his eyes. And when the door closed, he put up his handkerchief to his eyes and began to cry like a child.”

Mrs. Plunket's needles began a more active criss-crossing at this, and her voice faltered. But Oliver did not have any words to interpose.

"I did not know what to say," she resumed. "What could have so affected the stalwart heart of Father Coleman? I was asking myself. But fortunately baby Oliver woke up, and seeing the stranger, began to cry himself, and that gave me something to relieve the embarrassing silence."

Mother and son at this took time to smile, yet betraying the gleam of tears in each other's eyes.

"'My people locked up their houses on me,' said Father Coleman, as soon as he could speak. 'They would not answer to my knock.' I could easily see how painfully he took that rebuff.

"I quickly tried to apologize for the people, telling him that they were in hard circumstances just then, that the factories were next to nothing in their support, that they must have been penniless and broken-hearted, and would prefer not to meet their pastor than to have noth-

ing to give him for the new church. They would hide their poverty from him.

“‘That is what pains me most,’ he said. ‘I knew that the people in this section were suffering from the poor times, and I wanted to call and sympathize with them. I could not imagine that they would feel I was coming for money.’

“We had moved towards the parlor, where it was cool; and as Father Coleman seated himself he asked about your father’s health, adding, ‘I have not come here, as you must know, to ask for any contribution. I merely want to say that I intend to have Mr. Plunket undergo special treatment with an old Catholic man in Connecticut, where he will surely be cured; and I will come up and read a prayer over him before he goes.’

“I thanked him for that and then I said that we, too, must give what little we could towards the new church; and I leaned down to put you on a mat, Oliver.

“Father Coleman stood up immediately, guessing at my purpose, and waved his head

with its massive golden locks. 'I would not take one penny, not one penny, Mrs. Plunket,' he protested. 'How could I, how could I take anything from you or Bernard in these sorrowful times?'

"But you must, Father, you must let us have the blessing of assisting in this work, the new church," said I, and started towards the door to prevent him from going out, which he seemed on the point of doing. And how you did cry at this commotion, Oliver!" the mother had turned with her benignant smile towards her son.

"I told him, as I held the doorknob, that we could not give him much. I can see him now waving his hand to mean that he would not listen to any proposal of an offering from us.

" 'I cannot take it, I cannot take it,' he kept repeating.

"Then after I had insisted on giving our mite, ashamed as I was over the small amount it was, and all the ado that was made concerning it, I told him that he must pardon the meagre bit it was. 'It is the last half dollar we

have, the very last penny that Bernard and I have in this world, Father,' I said. And before he could make further protestation I quickly opened the door and sped upstairs for the poor, tiny purse."

"And I swelled out my chorus and solo of yelling I suppose," said Oliver, hiding his moistened eyes.

"Yes, you did take a new and healthier key when I left the room. But the priest lifted you up in his arms and was talking to you when I returned. Then he looked quite solemn at me, his face entirely free from any vestige of the grief and the pain and the heat it had at his entrance. He put his hand on your head, for you had grown quiet and your eyes opened wide and looked up at him.

"‘I will take this offering, Mary Plunket,’ he said to me, and I wondered at the marked change in his tone. ‘I will accept this offering—this sacrifice of your last penny.’ He held you out towards me, saying as I put the poor little half dollar into his hand, ‘May your faith find its reward. Amen! And you will live to

see this boy say Mass at the altar of that church! ”

A deep silence most naturally was the sequence to this last statement. Mrs. Plunket did not go on to narrate what else was said before the priest left the house that day. And Oliver Plunket, who all his school-days had been able to stand up before difficult ordeals unflinchingly, on the athletic field or in the classroom, and stand the strain, whatever it would be upon his physical and moral feelings, found it another thing to hide emotion after the story that he had just listened to. He pulled his chair towards his mother's side, taking her arm, and laying his cheek against it, looked up into her face.

“I have never told you of this before, though I have kept it in my heart all these years,” she said at the close of the silence. “I wanted you to make your decision about the future, before I should tell you.” And then, with an effort to show cheerfulness, though it was easy to detect the sigh that escaped her lips, she arose and whispered, “Now of course I have

told you, since you have all your plans made. And now I see that for me Father Coleman's words are not to come true—I mean that I shall never see you say Mass at the altar of the little church in Brookville.”

Oliver caught the regret that lingered over the last words, and he took his mother's arm to stay her from leaving the room.

CHAPTER VII

A WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

ALIGHT wind was swaying the pines and tossing the leaves of the lindens, making them show their undercoats of white, as Diarmid Gomez came down from the cottages to put the launch in readiness for the afternoon ride. The wrens that lived in a small box at the river landing warbled heartily, as if they were just starting out on a day of traffic. The martins in high circles above the barn were balancing themselves on the currents of air; while sparrows in the area beneath kept up a busy chatter, as if they were solicitous men on the floor of a stock-exchange. And humming-birds in a garden across the water were buzzing hard in their unwearied manner.

All this may be to weather prophets in New England a safe indication of a storm. But

Diarmid Gomez was preoccupied with his thoughts about Nora and gave no attention to the far-off indications of gathering clouds. Like a signal for silence—and the signal was immediately obeyed—the chugging of the boat and the churning of the water brought the voiceful birds to an abrupt termination of their varied chorus.

Molly came from the cottage with the children. But even they did not take any hint from sky or land about the approaching storm. Only the practised eye of a veteran tar or the keen sense of an old Yankee farmer could have made a guess in that direction. The few clouds that had blown across the sky while Diarmid was driving up from the train an hour ago had disappeared. Only a long, low mass of white vapor banked above the western hills—that lazy, characterless stretch of cloudy curtain which may be seen at the close of a sultry day—held the horizon up river, quite black below, if you scanned closely, and tapering up into a thin mist that seemed one with the hot dense air along the broad valley. Inert and

shapeless though the low line of clouds appeared, it could easily be whipped into action. A sudden change in the temperature by some agency out on the cool ocean would tighten the lines of the white mists and pound them into black masses, savage and scowling, and wring out of them the lightning and thunder that now hid behind the innocent drowsiness of their unwrinkled faces.

Such a weather calculation was far from the thoughts of Diarmid Gomez. One subject lingered in his mind. Even the boat got but a distracted attention from him; he could not heed the garrulous rivalries of a hundred birds, or that common vista of landscape and sky, the prosaic look that nature has on many a summer afternoon in New England. Even Molly's enthusiasm to name some points of beauty in the adjoining gardens and fields met with no response.

"All aboard," cried Aileen, as her brother signaled the children to go forward in the boat. Molly remained near him in the stern.

"Plack, plack," went the motor; "chug, chug," came the echo, and the churning water answered "fillish, fillish, fillish;" and the children shouted to Kate at the cottage door, and waved their hands with a great show of excitement.

"See the world moving away!" whispered Margaret.

"Hurrah!" called out Aileen, as they turned beyond the stone bridge. "I'll keep Margaret from getting seasick. And you, Molly, take good care of Diarmid."

With much delight, albeit without much speech, the riders watched the reeds and the willows wave to them as they passed along. Up by the quiet lowlands, by the staid farm-houses, the boat sped along as if it were a thing glad to be released from the moorings. Here and there, a house with its outlying buildings, all in a Sabbath-like setting, looked down on the observing group. If a person appeared in the fields or at one of the houses, the children would wave the boat pennants, and wave them again, if their salute was answered, or

even if the onlooker seemed at all disposed to accept the greeting.

"And perhaps I might offer a penny for your thoughts," Molly remarked as they were riding along. She sat up and faced her husband.

"More than that," came the answer. "Nora is worth more than a penny."

"But your thoughts on that subject may not be more highly valued," answered Molly. "I judge from the way they ran as we came home to-day." And she dipped her hand into the water, and allowed some drops to fall on his head.

"Well," he spoke with something of a drawl, "perhaps they are now, since you said that Nora is not anxious to enter the convent. I'm glad of that —" but he checked himself. "No, I do not mean that," he spoke up quickly, noticing the chiding look in his wife's face, and feeling his own correction. "I mean that I am glad she let you know about it. Not that I would not care to have her go; you know I would. But if she has decided not to go, as

you say—well, there is the reason for thinking. I want to do something—something towards making her happy, some means of entertainment for her.” He was awkward and showed it.

“Logic again!” said Molly, waving her hand in make-belief scorn.

But Diarmid did not observe the interruption, and he was only too willing to make his meaning clearer. “I was running through a plan, that is—” and the clumsy hesitation, as he felt it, came on him again, “I have arranged to get up some parties for Nora and the children, to make things pleasanter for them at home”—this in something like a whisper so that the children might not overhear.

Margaret and Aileen, however, were too busy with their Indian dialogue to be bothered with any other conversation.

“Oh, let us hear about these cunning designs.” Molly put on an air of intense curiosity with earnest pretense, and moved towards the wheel.

“Give a guess,” he said half-heartedly. “Or

rather, what suggestions would you offer in that line yourself?" His forced smile betrayed disconcertment.

"And spoil yours? Catch me!" she said, loud enough to cause Margaret to turn quickly with a merry smile and ask, "Going to jump, Molly?"

"Wait till I see you!" called out Aileen, as she fixed herself to watch the pretended jump.

A few minutes given to a playful dialogue between the passengers in the bow and those at the stern followed; then Diarmid came back to his subject.

"Well, first of all, I have asked some of the fellows—and you must look out to ask the girls—to come to some parties that I will organize, both here and when we go back to town." His tone was calm enough, but it showed that he was tentative in his suggestion of "his plans."

"And first of all, you have asked Oliver Plunket and Clare, I suppose," said Molly approvingly.

"I did have them in mind and Shane Desmond, too, though they will come, as they have

been accustomed to do," he said. "But, as I told you, I was not able to overtake Oliver at the station this morning."

"And you'll find it harder to overtake Shane Desmond, quoth I," said Molly. "We shall not hear from him till we know where Clare is."

"Nora will soon find that out," he went on. "I met Kenneth Shankee in town this morning and asked him to be one of us, in fact I insisted on his coming out to-day, though he did not seem very reluctant, I must confess."

"What, that poor polly-wolly-doodle!" she asked, making such a grimace that the children were tempted to come back to inquire into the mystery. "Why, he's merely a wax-figure, something for a shop-window," Molly went on, yet without interfering with her husband's placidity.

"And therefore harmless," he remarked.

"But I think that Nora or any other girl might allow herself to dislike him very cordially, and not infringe on the duties of the Eighth Commandment, either, by so doing,"

she answered with pert decisiveness; which was but play, however.

Diarmid proceeded to give a sample of epithets that would not slight the commandment of charity. "Oh, grant that he is just a tin-polished talking-machine, a quack in the art of hyperbole, and tries to spin his shoddies into wonderful yarns, shabby stuff I admit he makes of talk at times. But that is the worst that can be said of him, I think. And on the other hand, speaking for the affirmative, as we used to say in debates at school, Kenneth Shankee has some rather interesting things to talk about, remarkable histories——"

"His stories," broke in Molly, "as somebody said of Macaulay."

"Well, interesting at all events," said Diarmid in a small manner of conciliation. "And for that I think he will make a member of our groups, and hold his own."

"He may pass with Margie and Aileen," she bowed towards the children.

"We'll see," replied Diarmid, and went on to reassure her. "This very afternoon, as I

stopped to speak with him on Tremont Street, he ran off a list of ten or fifteen incidents that he figured in while he was wintering in the Maine woods. He had just returned from his extensive outing in the wilds. I could not wait to hear of them in detail, being in a hurry for the train. But I told him where we are staying till September, and asked him to come out. He had an important engagement waiting for him in Concord, he said. And then I told him that I would ride up that way this afternoon and bring him back with us for the evening, if his business was ended. I know he will fill up a night with his tales of travel. So here we go," and he pretended to hasten the boat on with a gesture. "We shall have a good hour of truth and fable from Shankee."

Nothing, surely, but blank ignorance on the part of Diarmid Gomez with regard to the character of Kenneth Shankee could have tempted him to proffer the invitation to which he had just alluded. Had he known what a moral leper Shankee was, Diarmid would have drawn a circle as large as any township and

prevented that pest from coming within it. The worst he thought of him was the slight depreciation that Molly had worded: that Kenneth Shankee was a wax figure, a stilted growth of affectation, a past master in braggadocio. He was acquainted with some of the idiosyncrasies of the young swell, harmless shams Diarmid considered them, though he knew that they were laughed at and ridiculed by sincere men about town: Shankee's constant chatter, in a feigned nonchalance about the élite of the city and its suburbs, as if he belonged intimately to them; how he hung his eyelids, and his weak, drooping jaw, his nose condescending, as it were, to sniff the air, the cheap, every-day air that other mortals had to live upon; how he drawled out his syllables, half-stifling them behind his palate, as if he scorned to use organs of speech so vulgar as the lips and tongue.

"Bad case of catarrh, I reckon," said an old Yankee who stood listening to Shankee one day.

"Shut or open, his mouth makes him a fool,"

said another upon hearing ten words or less from the *poseur*.

"He's an ass," said a young Harvard man whose store was next to Diarmid's. "Does the fool think that kind of braying is the thing?"

And these paltry defects constituted the substance of what ill reports Diarmid knew about Kenneth Shankee. He was a stranger, in the full sense of the word, to that foul career that Shankee chose to follow, or was driven to, in his brilliant world, an underworld for all its false brilliancy. An almost entire lack of association with him accounted for this ignorance. In earlier years he had been intimate enough with the Shankees. Their family and his and the Plunkets formed a little circle of endearing friendship. But, as we shall see, the death of Kenneth's father brought a severance of the ties; and for the most part now their meetings were those of mere acquaintances. Kenneth started life with the same promise of honorable success that made his former friends even amidst their own trials

and griefs so happy. But he fell into other channels. Shankee's deluded mother entertained ambitions towards a higher social circle; and she steered Kenneth that way. So did he come to be separated from his former playmates and companions. Diarmid saw little of him; others saw much, too much, either for his own good, or for their forbearance.

How he went on from his first practise in pretense to deep-dyed hypocrisy and to open disgrace need not be recounted in these pages. "My Lord Cesspool" and the other unmitigated epithets that were attached to him with full outspoken emphasis at the Clubs into which he had gained admission may be left where they were uttered, over the billiards or the bar.

And, with one word more, the "important business in Concord" of which he had grotesquely hinted to Diarmid that very day, was nothing less than a marriage that he held up to mockery. In reality it had been no marriage, as any Catholic knows, though Kenneth had long since lost all Catholic scruples. We

should call it, but that it touches upon sacred things, a cheap theatre melodrama, whose dénouement, this very afternoon, was to be a cowardly divorce.

Fortunately for Diarmid Gomez and for the little house over which he stood guardian with fatherly solicitude, the storm, which during the past hour multiplied hints of its approach, prevented him from going to Concord. By some unlucky chance he might have met the unsuspected wolf, in his innocent-looking sheep's clothing. And he might have offered him shelter against the raging tempest. But such a peril was averted for at least one day, a blessing surely for the little community and its welfare.

On a sudden the wind came whirring down the wide Sudbury valley. Its stir and commotion made the four riders look up and scan the lowering skies, the clouds riding about as if in savage glee, anxious to do battle against a too timid earth. A flashing light, like a far-off signal—a command to march on and be quick about it—lit up the black masonry of the

airy battlements, and reflected itself high among the plumed helmets of the clouds.

Diarmid swung the rudder around, impatient to wait for the slow gyrations of the steering gear, and pointed the boat back down the stream.

"Come this way, careful now—slip down here, Margie and Aileen," he called to the children, and Molly reached out to steady their way. "We may ship water at the bow if the wind cuts up very much."

The children nestled into Molly's arms, and watched, not without some alarm, the greening surface of the water as the wind whipped it into shivering ripples. Then came whitecaps in miniature ahead at the frequent turns in the river. Soon the black clouds moved above them, scowling, and threatening to put their scowls into action before the boat should reach the landing. Behind them the cannons of the thunder boomed, and the long echoing reverberations shook the flat meadow-lands and the woods, till, it would seem, the trees must grow insensible to every sound, and fall dead with

fright. Swack! a blinding flash of lightning shot across the sullen clouds, and swack! quick upon it, the cracking thunder ripped the air directly back of the boat. Every right hand went up to make the Sign of the Cross, and the children made one a second time.

"We'll beat the storm home," Diarmid said to his little sisters, putting on a cheerful tone. He had pulled out raincoats from a seat-box.

And the party did come to the landing before the rain began to pour down like a deluge. The clouds were going to pay interest for the long inactivity of the afternoon.

Diarmid quickly put his passengers ashore. Kate was standing at the step, waiting with umbrellas and coats; and she rushed off directly with the "the little darlin's."

"I'll get the carriage out and run over to the station for Nora," Diarmid called out, as he saw the group waiting on the porch for him. "I will be back by six o'clock."

A half hour later he received Nora at the train. The excitement of the storm and the need of attending to his sister's comfort put

away from him any disposition to notice how she looked, whether or not there might be any tell-tale indications upon her face of the business that summoned her to Boston. He could not but notice, however, as they drove on—for the storm abated, and invited them to be off home before it could return for a second encounter—he very easily observed that Nora seemed unusually merry, and her face, in the occasional glimpse he got of it, was alight with joy. When her talk with Diarmid stopped she vivaciously called out to the dog that was running along by the carriage. All the way home, it was Nora in a spirit of elation born of some interior joy that chatted at times even in tones that were akin to singing.

“I saw Kenneth Shankee in the Subway this noon,” was one of her concluding remarks. “And, O, Diarmid,” she said, lending her voice to pity, “he seemed so dreadfully changed, so wretched.” Perhaps it was nearer her mind to say “so wicked.” But Nora was no reporter of such phases of peoples’ looks. “He came over to speak to me and said that he might

come in to see us, after he finished with some urgent business in Concord." And with a sigh she added, "How awfully unhappy they must be—the Shankees, I mean."

How unhappy indeed they were, if Nora could only pierce the veil of a few miles and look in, as we shall, upon a scene of utter wretchedness.

Then she turned brightly again towards her brother and asked him for every detail of the afternoon, the ride up the river; did Margie and Aileen enjoy it? did they see the queer hermit who lives in the tent near the covered bridge, or any Indians behind the stonewalls on the hills? did they find out where the squirrels come from? and a hundred other childish questions, half of them expecting no answer and receiving none.

By the time they reached their little wood, the wind changed its course, and was driving at the low clouds, making them look afrighted and anxious to flee westward from the blows. It took no experienced weather-prophet to predict that the storm which had so

quickly charged upon the Sudbury valley was tired of its effort and was going back routed. Later in the evening, as Kenneth Shankee was to feel, the storm would return with renewed vigor, and show a deeper kind of wrath in the environs of Charles Street.

CHAPTER VIII

SO NEAR AND YET SO FAR

HAD Nora Gomez arrived at Glendalough before Oliver Plunket that afternoon (to return to the "embassy"), it is quite probable that this chronicle of their lives would find little to record beyond the present page. Other issues, more interesting perhaps, might have come to pass in the long years afterwards, along by different paths and up to other summits where old age was to meet them. But whatever those possible events might have led to, in some other contingency, it is sufficient to know at this point that so slight a circumstance as the precedence of Oliver at Glendalough will give a richer joy to the year that follows and even to the wedding bells in June. Within hearing of the bells that morning a fuller measure of peace and happiness will be in many hearts—more than would have been possible had the history of this August

afternoon occurred otherwise to Nora Gomez and Oliver Plunket. A small matter, indeed, is the space of ten minutes; yet it takes but a shorter time for one, halting at a cross road, to step to the right or the left, to go a way that leads to triumph or to one beset with difficulties and terminating in defeat. And again, let the slightest deflection be made in the course of a tiny stream, such as the root of a tree about a spring has been known to effect, and a new direction may be given to a mighty river that cuts out a far-reaching valley, and dots it with towns and cities, leaving desolate another valley that it might have populated.

Oliver Plunket, being accessible to better railroad facilities, was the first to arrive at the North Station; Nora's train, though scheduled to arrive at the same time, was detained on the opposite bank of the Charles River by an open drawbridge.

Oliver went directly for a car to Glendalough. As he rode along in the Subway, a thought flashed across his mind to get off at Summer Street and see Diarmid Gomez. He

did not forget the earnest injunction of his sister to get news of Nora. But the excessive heat put this impulse away from him. Moreover, on the way up in the Manchester train, he had resolved to attend first to the business at Glendalough, to have that done with, and ease his mind, if he could, of the solicitous problem it carried. If time permitted after that, or if the day grew a trifle cooler, he could go in to see Diarmid and inquire about Nora.

His route went over the Commonwealth Avenue course, and not by Beacon Street, a more direct way to Glendalough, and one that Oliver knew like a memory lesson in one of his books. Oliver came to the terminal at the foot of the hill, leading up to the picturesque buildings of his old prep school, St. Merville's. He stood for a few minutes under a purple beech, to look at the old familiar towers. Three hills—though they are not the original Trimount of the old city—attract the eyes of visitors in Boston: Beacon Hill with its golden dome above the Capitol; Bunker Hill and the monument that marks memorable acres of land;

and the hill of St. Moville's with its terraces and buildings, clustered about the majestic Gothic tower.

Oliver's thoughts, as he stood looking up the hill, did not come or go in the order of sequence. His mind was active rather with a disjointed series of emotions and flashes of feeling, half-felt and very lightly entertained; now a hint of some incident that occurred there seven years ago, or again (as quickly suggested and as quickly dismissed), one of three years ago; now a face of an old classmate or of a teacher passed before his mind from an affectionate memory; now an old picture—what was it anyway?—so indistinct in the corner under the hallway shadows; and see now the blue writing-books into which he had put so much ink. Three years gone, and yet what a small valley of time between him and the hill up yonder! He could bridge it and all that lay between with one stroke of memory.

Not without a twinge of sorrow did Oliver realize that years had gone past him; in that very locality had time and tide passed that wait

for no man. And that is a realization that touches youth to the quick, whenever it finds a little window to peep into the heart. Now, if it comes in the still hours of the night, it makes him sit up in bed, and almost gasp for breath, whispering something about the inexorable passing of time: "Going, going, gone," under the hammer of an impatient auctioneer. Youth is now behind him—here comes manhood. How? What? and a flood of unfinished questions rush in at him.

Oliver Plunket, especially during the past year, had experienced that phase of life, so full of anxious self-questioning. He had met such hours often in the solitary evenings, with their inner whisperings, gentle yet insistent; more urgently they came if he thought to flout them away. But for the most part he faced them calmly. He was a soldier's son, and had learned to stand up in the face of fire. He treated with them as he might do with any calculations in the outer world, honestly and with due consideration. And therefore this present hour, and the purpose he had in mind

meant something, something of lifelong concern to him and to his future in life.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men," he said, recalling a sentence out of Shakespeare that he had thought so striking years ago in his reading, "which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."

At that he stopped his musing, made a half conscious salute to St. Moville's, and in the shade of the park walk set out for Glendalough.

He came up the broad avenue of linden trees to the Faculty House, quite out of breath and showing the effect of the brisk gait. He was glad to be ushered into a cool parlor by the Brother who met him at the door. If a slight nervous anxiety lingered in his heart, as he sat in anticipation of the confession he was going to make, it was far from being a feverish nightmare, such as unreal people in books are depicted with, while they await the issue of an hour that will decide their future course in life. Oliver Plunket is too healthy, both in body and soul for such psychological phenomena. A tremendous responsibility

hangs upon this interview, as he sincerely believes. But he does not lean his soul upon a reed. He knows an unfailing source of strength; he has built his assurance not on the shifting sand, but on the immovable rock, where every Christian wisely puts his foundations. Education, at home and at school, had proved to him that there is a confidence which never deceives.

Far from him then, during the ten minutes of waiting, was any unreal imagination that he waited there, as if in the pages of an old Greek author, a pitiful pilgrim at the shrine of Apollo; or standing stupefied with Dante and Virgil before some eternal dénouement of grief or joy. Oliver Plunket, if he grew consciously reflective, would rest his thoughts and their conclusions not on vapid imaginings but on a true philosophy. He knew—and the sun shining out beyond the windows was no truer thing to him—that there is One, Who is the Way and the Truth; and that an infallible Voice had said, “Seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you.” And Oliver

Plunket,—but we have said enough on a thought that he himself would prefer to leave unsaid, as indeed we should have done, if we were not desirous to make it clear that he waited there in the Glendalough parlor with confident equanimity, even though he was going to settle upon the turn in the road that his life should take. He had in some measure parleyed with Procrastination during the past year or more; now he would stand sentry resolutely at the pass, and challenge the future, to see which voice it had for friendship and which was of the foe. He had resolved to speak out candidly, right-about-face to the matter, yet with humility; but dealing in no half-way revelations of his purpose, or in enigmatic phrases.

CHAPTER IX

OLIVER'S CONFESSION

A VENERABLE figure in a black soutane, his head in an aureole of silvery hair, appeared at the doorway, holding Oliver's card between his fingers and bowing graciously, yet with an inquiring look, towards the young visitor. Oliver advanced to meet the old priest, offering his apology at the same time, for intruding at an hour when the heat was so intense.

"Colonel Plunket's boy, perhaps?" asked the kind old voice, with an emphasis that expected the answer to be affirmative.

"Yes, Father," came the answer, "I had the pleasure of meeting you over at St. Moville's four years ago. You were preaching our retreat exercises at the beginning of the school year; and after one of your final talks I came in to speak with you about myself."

"Why, now I recall the day; yes, dear, I re-

member it well;" the old priest spoke with enthusiasm, and took Oliver's arm to lead him out towards the cool shade of the cloister arcade. "And this is Oliver Plunket! Well, well! Bless my poor old memory! How you have grown!" And he straightened his inclining shoulders, lifting up his head that he might have a better view of his young friend, the son of dear old Colonel Plunket.

Oliver was smiling at the old man's evident joy. He felt assured at the genial welcome accorded him; he would surely come through his consultation with success.

"Four years make a difference to all of us, Father," he said, as they seated themselves under one of the arches.

"They do, indeed, Oliver," answered the priest. "And how have you been, and your folks during these years?"

"Very well, thank you, Father," he replied. "We are spending the summer, mother and Clare and I, at our Manchester cottage." And then before Father Campion could ask about other details, Oliver went on, anxious to

get at his chief thought. "I did not tell them that I was coming to see you especially. I merely told them that I would be away on a little business at Glendalough."

"A little business?" queried the old man; and with a smile he added, "Glendalough is a dull place for business during the summer months."

"Some thoughts will take no vacation," Oliver answered with a little laugh. And yet the color came to his cheeks, as if he were abashed. But he sat up straight and said, with simple directness, "And this is my business, Father—for I must not tire you on so hot a day, and I will be brief with it."

Father Campion nodded and took an attitude that bespoke kindly attentiveness.

"I want to talk with you about a very important topic, at least it is an important one to me." Again Oliver tried to conceal a little waver in his voice under a smile, "I do not seem like a person who is beset with worry," the priest's venerable head was bowing good-naturedly, "but something like worry sits heavily on me at times, Father, though I have hidden it,

I think, from the notice of those at home."

"Worry is not a healthy atmosphere for the head or the heart, Oliver," said Father Campion with an accent of kindness. "I hope it does not arise from any affair at home."

"No, Father," was the prompt reply, "the cause is not there; it is right here with me, Father."

Father Campion affected no surprise at the statement even though Oliver's manner in making it betokened some feeling of hesitancy, perhaps of nervousness. A long experience in dealing with troubled souls had trained the priest to preserve an equable benignity and calmness at any revelation that was made to him. He could see at a glance that Oliver had something to speak about, and in that brief glance, noticing the candid eyes and the determined chin, and the lips that showed alertness for laughter, or for indignation if need be, he caught the resemblance to the features of Colonel Plunket.

"Don't borrow trouble, Oliver," he said kindly, coming in on the silence that followed

the young man's last words; "especially if you wish to live to my years." And his head raised up to show that his was a green old age.

And then, as Oliver was not prepared to speak, the priest added: "Worry and discouragement are evil whispers, you remember; and they come not from sources that are friendly, when a man is trying to see his duty and fulfil it like a man."

Oliver brightened at this remark, one that you may have heard a thousand times, which therefore sounds now like a respectable commonplace. But Oliver had reason to think it impressive because it looked into his soul, and also because he had heard Father Campion use that thought before; and he felt a little pleasure in his keen memory of it, though he was not vain enough to speak about this point.

He did not wish to drift from his main purpose. At a becoming place in the colloquy he said, "Here is the source of my anxiety, Father, of the worry that I mentioned. I'll make a brief summary of it, for I do not want to tire you this hot afternoon."

Oliver told his story. It had to do with that question of a life-vocation, that problem which every independent and serious-minded person must face where the roads meet, and one of them is to be chosen for the great journey of life. Some who are not independent in making this election—they for whom circumstances are insistent, who oftentimes may not be absolutely free in their choice—they must make the most of the road that is offered to them. And there are others who refuse to cultivate a rational cast of mind, and who, therefore, go blindly ahead, closing their eyes and trusting to some fortuitous issue. But Oliver Plunket was not of these. He could have drifted onward, and yet found on any point of the horizon that lay before him the promise of temporal success. He preferred to look at his problem in a straightforward manner, listening to the debated question with every faculty alert, and attentive and unprejudiced, to be ready to answer it out of the clearest and surest oracle that the mind could give; for he had taken heed of a parable that speaks of the pearl be-

yond all price, and of that man who is wise to sell all, that he may possess the unique treasure.

"At that retreat over at St. Moville's four years ago, Father," he went on to say, "you put forth certain ideals for us in life. They fall into two classes as you said—the one that lives and gets to the goal safely by keeping the commandments of God, the other that aims at a higher state, by following the counsels of Christ, the life of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, the life of one who sells all that he has and gives it to the poor and follows Christ. I recall as if it were of yesterday the picture you set before us of the young man in the gospel. He did what was required by keeping the commandments. But then, upon asking for something more, something making for a higher life even, Christ invited him to that other perfection; and, alas! sadness seized upon him, and he went back to his fortune, back to the worldly riches that he cherished. Father," Oliver was discoursing with childlike simplicity, "it may seem exaggerated to say so, but I can see the sorrowful look even now

on the face of Christ as that young man turns away."

The earnestness of Oliver's thoughts added to the animation of his speech, yet he seemed composed enough as he turned his eyes with an expression of simple candor towards Father Campion. It was this calm look that kept the old priest from breaking in upon the narrative, for he would not be inclined to listen long to talk that was swayed or permeated with emotions, especially in such a business as that which now concerned him.

"Yet, Father," Oliver went on, "I had decided to remain at Glendalough for my college course. Come and go, as that picture would at times, I felt no very urgent need to hearken with full attentiveness to its suggestions. I could put off conclusions till my senior year. And here I am." He turned with the same look of unaffected simplicity, though, even as he smiled, a sharp eye might see a slight quivering of the lip and a minute tension of the facial muscles, and thereby perceive that Oliver was not discoursing listlessly.

Father Campion ran his cane across the brick pavement to make a flock of chattering sparrows rise up and whirr away to the niches of the arcade—a merry picture at which the old priest laughed with delight, though he was merely intent upon interposing a slight pause in the narrative.

“And then, Oliver?” he queried, looking benignly out upon the calm lawn.

“And then, Father, I found that that picture would assert itself, and a small whispered voice came with it, insistent yet gentle, speaking with its quiet appealing force, yes, even in the most unexpected places.” He looked up at the silent arches about the cloister, and took a deep breath, waiting and then wishing that Father Campion would have some question to ask that might elicit more of this personal history.

But the black-robed judge and counselor was quite content with the narrative as it was going. He had a trained mind for such situations. He had learned how to put his finger accurately upon a conclusion that he could un-

erringly fetch up from hints and even wide inferences.

Oliver, however, did not force his case to a thorough hearing. A knock sounded at the huge oak door of the cloister courtyard. An old Brother came down the arcaded walk bearing a visitor's card. He did not mention the name, but merely said as he handed the card to the priest. "In the east parlor," and moved away.

Whether absorbed in Oliver's story, or inadvertent to what, at first, seemed a strange name, Father Campion merely looked at the card in silence. Had his memory been quick to recall certain associations of the past, he would have read the name aloud—for the card was sent in by Nora Gomez—and the old priest once knew that the Gomez and Plunket families were intimate friends; four years ago he himself was a confidant in that friendship. And now, by an easy lapse of memory, because his mind was absorbed by other considerations, he failed to tell Oliver that Nora was then so near them.

At this summons of a new caller for Father

Campion, Oliver arose, thinking not to prolong his own visit, important though he considered it. But the old priest placed a gentle hand on Oliver's arm and, motioning him to be seated again, bade him go on with his narrative.

"What remains," he said, again protesting against detaining the priest, "I can put in a few words, Father. I have come to this conclusion about my present position; I have not, at least it seems to me now, any special call to the life of the Counsels, to serve my days that way—that is," he adopted the familiar phraseology, "to sell what I have, and give it to the poor, leave home and kindred and follow Christ. The desire to do that, the clear, strong desire—that is not mine now, at least, as I said, clear and strong. Some inclination towards it, some feeling for it, yes. I can see the reasons, but my will lags behind. I am not trying to evade it, Father. But I simply say I have not the desire. But this I know out of my best judgment—I would give whatever little I have, I would give it

all, anything that I have, to be possessed of that desire. There now, Father," and he bowed modestly to signify that he would prefer not to detain the kind old man longer, "you have the condition of my mind and will."

He was speaking with some animation, perhaps with a manner approaching vehemence. And Father Campion, thinking to mitigate the impassioned agitation, arose and took the young man's arm, walking away with him towards the cloister exit.

"You need not be anxious, too anxious, Oliver, about all this," he said with his benign tone. "You must not court worry or disquiet. Leave such plagues to Babylon, the place of noise and confusion; you stay out on the sunny plain in the peaceful air near the City of God," and he smiled knowingly, as Oliver did, who understood the allusion to that famous allegory in "The Two Standards." And Father Campion, when they came to the west exit (for they did not return by the parlor corridor), lifted his hand to Oliver's shoulder, saying, "And when the Master comes

along by your post, making His roll-call, you will get the right assignment to the ranks, the right place, Oliver, your own true place, assuring you of strength and unshaken peace. He knows, He knows." And then on the half-averted face of the dear old priest you could have seen, as Oliver very probably did, that kindly look, at once peaceful and serene with assurance, even joyful as the steady eyes were fixed on a horizon beyond the terraces and the far-off hills. Father Campion had lived a wide life, fifty years in the garb of a Religious, not in books merely, but with the real histories of living men and women.

"I must not keep you any longer, Father, please," said Oliver, as he put his hand forward. "I will have plenty of opportunities during the coming year to see you." The priest was bowing his head, and Oliver went on, "You know how I stand now, that is, pardon me for repeating it, I feel that the business and social world is to be mine not in consequence of a direct choice, or because all my best impulses lie plainly that way, but because

—because I do not seem to have a clear call the other way.” And after another slight hesitation, his clear-cut manly face looking up, strong in every line with marked determination, and yet with a certain childlike grace of modesty about it, he added, “But I honestly say that I would give all I have, all I call my own, to have that desire, to get the pearl beyond all price.”

They were standing in the shade of a group of arbor-vitæ trees. Father Campion raised his hand and set it on Oliver's head, whispering a blessing, and with a hearty “Thank you, Father,” Oliver went down the walk, happier and more elate of mind than he had been for months past; and as he walked along, he brought his mother and Clare into his thoughts, drawing them as near to him as affection and exaltation of feeling could bring them there across the lawns of Glendalough.

CHAPTER X

NORA'S RENOUNCEMENT

FATHER CAMPION stood a moment with his hand on the parlor door, his eyes glancing in by the glass panels. The visitor arose, he could see, as he opened the door.

"Eleanora Gomez?" he asked; he saw the head bow, and he heard a familiar voice answer, "Yes, Father, this is Nora."

His kindly face lit up, and looked aglow under his white locks. "This is Nora," he added, taking her hand, and then motioning her to a chair. "Now grown up into a woman is the little Kenhurst girl of a few years ago."

"Four years, Father," said Nora, "and it does seem like yesterday;" and then with a tone that suggested embarrassment for this admission, "it is a very long time since I wrote to you."

"Why, yes, yes, dear," Father Campion looked up, opening wide his eyes to aid his expression of surprise, "and why did you discon-

tinue your letters?" And without allowing Nora to respond, he went on, "You wrote regularly to me after my last visit to Kenhurst—a retreat, I think. You told me about yourself—about yourself." He paused thinking it might not be welcome on her part for him to allude to the topic that had been the subject of her letters. "But you must go right on now where you left off—all the news about yourself, yes, and about the dear ones at home. My! my!" his voice raised, "how delighted I am to see Nora Gomez again!" And again he lifted up his bent shoulders bringing his head erect, the deep joyous look on his saintly face verifying his last statement.

And then Nora, indulging in enthusiastic exclamations and feminine superlatives, whenever she touched on some special point for emphasis, went on with her full answer to the priest's questions. Her narrative began with the little cottage in the woods at Lincoln, "their hermitage by the peaceful Sudbury River;" and it did not end (now and then Father Campion put in a question of course) till she had re-

counted the history of the past four years and had brought herself and her attentive auditor back to Kenhurst. By that it was easy to come to the subject that was uppermost in Nora's mind now, the principal subject of her thoughts these months past, and that for which she had this day undertaken, as she had said to the children, with her playful mystifying, "the embassy to Glendalough."

"I saw by the morning paper that you were here, Father, and I came in at once, though perhaps I should have asked you first, to tell you about that—" and she waited to see if he caught her allusion, "the thing, I mean, that I spoke of so often in my letters—the vocation that I felt called to follow, the life according to the Counsels, as you sometimes called it—to leave home and serve Our Lord in Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience."

Then as the aged priest made no attempt to interfere, she proceeded, though there was unmistakably a little tremor in her voice and a hint of tears in her eyes, "I am beginning to feel, or rather I have been led to feel for some

time past, indeed that is why I ceased to write, that I must give up my inclination towards that calling, abandon the hope that I so strongly entertained when I was leaving Kenhurst. It was a strong hope, Father," she added with a tone of sorrow in the emphasis, "and it was founded in a desire still stronger. And you know that you used to say that the desire is the chief part—that and the aptitude with ability to go being the vocation itself."

Father Campion, in his masterful way, comprehended the situation at once. "Yes, my child, and the desire alone, that alone by itself was a gift you must feel grateful for, as you do, my child." And he kept his face averted lest, as he feared, he might prevent Nora from telling with full confidence the remainder of the story.

"Indeed it was a blessed gift, Father," she continued with a brave heart in her voice, "and I will keep grateful for it forever. But now about giving it up, Father. You see my brother Diarmid is married—I wrote when he married a year ago, and that was my last letter

to you, I am ashamed to say. Well, Diarmid married and that left me full charge of my sisters at home, Margie and Aileen, you remember, Father?" and she waited while he bowed his reply.

"Well, now, Father, Margie is only six and Aileen is eight, and I must look after their education for years to come until they are grown girls. There, there is the difficulty, Father, I must wait and care for them, which means that I cannot enter the convent, that I must abandon the thought, give up the desire that has been my very life these past years."

Nora stood up suddenly to keep her feeling from signs of grief that could easily have come upon her. She leaned a hand on the little table before her, and looked out the window towards the tranquil lake down the hill.

Fortunately, Father Campion arose and motioned towards the door, "Let us go down the cool walks," he said; "we can talk there, Nora, and you must not tire yourself or let the least shadow of worry come into your mind."

"I will try not to worry, Father. It would

ill become me to show worry or disappointment among the dear ones at home," she answered cheerily as she could; "but it will seem strange to go on looking forward now to another life, to the world and what it calls its society."

"But you must not give up hope," he spoke assuringly as they came slowly down the shaded walk. "You must be patient and, and—" he was searching for a consoling word to say, "and let me just offer one reflection that will help you; it will be a source of joy to you, Nora, till I see you again, after I think this over. Let me say that you must make Our Lord a very special prayer of thanksgiving for the gift He gave to you, even if it was only for four years, and from now on you cease to have it. I mean the desire that He gave you, when you were leaving school. My dear Nora, that in itself was a tremendous blessing. See what such a thought, such a desire has meant to your life for the past four years. It was a sacred purpose. It has filled your life with happiness, it has helped you powerfully to keep in a state of soul that the world cannot estimate, in the

state of sanctifying grace; it has filled your heart and soul with countless spiritual benefits, whose value for eternal life you will not know till the great hereafter. Nora, you are to-day what you are—in the peace of soul, the cleanness of heart—because of that desire, greatly because of that.”

As Father Campion ceased talking and looked the while across the quiet stretch of lawn, Nora found no words ready to speak in keeping with this consideration. Her head bent slightly forward, her entire being as if in deep attention, and her face seemed aglow with feelings that Father Campion's words had aroused within her.

Directly the kind old priest resumed his talk, keeping in the high religious atmosphere for only a while, lest, as he thought, his sermon might be overdone and tend to aggravate the depression of his young client rather than console her after she had gone home. He would find it convenient to add other spiritual thoughts on a later occasion.

Only once in the conversation that followed

did he return to the matter of Nora's former desire. "Why, Nora," he said with a voice that years of exercise in consoling people had made a perfect instrument to represent the sympathy of his great heart, "only while you were telling me of yourself, I had to think of a young man who came recently to say to me that he would give everything in his possession, he would leave all that is near and dear to him, if he could obtain that which you have, that strong desire to follow Our Lord in the more perfect way. He has the means to go, he has some fortune, he has some prospects for success wherever he turns—but he has not the desire such as you have. He can see reasons for heeding the call, but the reasons do not win his will. Ah, there is a matter for God's illuminating grace, and there is his sorrow—that he does not possess the strong desire to go on. Here, you see, Nora, is a young man who can almost envy you your gift. How grateful, I say, ought you to be for what you have received, even though—and let us pray God it comes to be fulfilled—even though at present—" he smiled and pointed to-

ward the west where huge masses of clouds were giving hints of an approaching storm—"even though the clouds will darken the sunlight for a while."

Nora looked with some slight alarm towards the clouds, but her mind was fast on what she had just heard—the chapter out of the life of Oliver Plunket, though she knew not that it concerned him, the brother of her dear friend, Clare. For a moment her heart turned with sympathy to the interesting person of whom she had just heard. Father Campion did not surmise that this last statement was to go so deeply into the thoughts of the young woman before him; neither did Nora then realize that before many months should pass these words of the old priest were to stand out vividly in her memory, and that they were to wring her heart during the days of trial, and bring hot tears to her eyes, tears that were from pain, though not entirely, yet sweetened from the sense of sacrifice.

The two walked toward the gateway; for Nora scented a storm in the gathering clouds,

and her heart, that of a mother's now, since her little sisters became orphans, beat with concern for two little babes in the woods of Lincoln.

Father Campion, as they came under one of the wide-spreading trees, halted as if to end the afternoon's colloquy with some pleasant reminiscence. "How like the great oak at Kenhurst is this?" he said, his countenance beaming for the sake of the guest.

"O, yes, Father," she answered, putting aside as best she could the sober mood that should have mastered another person's feelings. "Do you recall, Father, you sat there with three of us at the end of the retreat, with Clare Plunket and Molly Keyes and myself, and told us many pleasantries about the future."

"Did I, Nora?" he asked with something of a child's glee in his tone.

"Why, yes, Father!" and the bright voice spoke forth like it did formerly when a school-girl's. "O, yes, I remember you said you could tell us the name of the man who should marry any of us." She was laughing at this, under

the charm that a simple remembrance of an old school-day had cast upon her.

"Did I guess the name aright?" came a kindly question.

"Why, you said the name was Felix Fortunatus," Nora answered, while both laughed merrily. "And we three understood the pun, for we knew that much of Latin."

"And Molly is the one," Father Campion said, "and your brother is the happy Felix and the fortunate Fortunatus."

They were come near the gateway on Beacon Street and were looking up the wide way to see if a car were in sight.

"And Clare Plunket?" but Father Campion stayed his question. He suddenly realized that he had need to leave the Plunkets out of the talk, lest by some word he might reveal the recent visit of Oliver, or the business upon which Oliver came to him a few moments ago.

"Why there is a matter for shame on my part," Nora responded without waiting for the completion of the question. "I have neglected to write to Clare since she went west with her

mother; I have been awfully neglectful; and I do not know where she is now."

"I will send the address to you, as I can easily find it out," he replied, "soon, soon, I will send it, for you must have Clare come out to see you, and you must take Margie and Aileen down to Manchester. The Plunkets are at Manchester—I'll send you the street address."

A car appeared at the hill near the St. Mo-ville campus. Nora, out of a full heart of gratitude, made her adieu to Father Campion. He stood watching the car as it bore her away towards the city. Something akin to the loneliness of heart that he felt was hers came to his own feelings for the moment. He continued to look down the broad street as he breathed a blessing upon the good soul that was traveling back home to the little cottage in the far-off hamlet, alone but confident, strong and sure in a confidence that people know who rely on the loving care of God. The noisiest corner of a city and the loneliest dell in the mountains may take on the serenity and joy of a peaceful cloister, if the heart has endued itself

with the blessed spirit of resignation to a prevailing but loving will. You know that line out of Dante: "In His will is our peace."

Yet Father Campion, as he walked leisurely back towards the Faculty House, turned now and then to glance down the direction of the city, lingering and pondering over thoughts that came to him in the silence. Two young hearts, out of hundreds whom he intimately knew there, took possession of his most affectionate interest. The remarkable coincidence of the two consultations quite amazed him, notwithstanding all the marvelous dealings the past had brought him in his work of directing souls. There, as he whispered to himself coming up the steps, was a young man who could dream of good success out in that place that men called "the world." Yet now his soul was struggling to know the way he ought to turn; it had caught up and accepted some of the reasons for a life as a priest, and yet it seemed to lack the full power to persuade his will. And here, on the other hand, was a young woman in strong possession of a kindred desire, yet now,

without the freedom to satisfy all these holy longings of her soul. Another duty, and that by the disposition of God, constituted her vocation for the present—the care of her little sisters, and a mother's love for them until they should be able to direct their own lives.

“That way lies Manchester,” said the old priest as he raised his head and peered off towards the horizon northward. Then slowly he turned towards the west where thick black clouds were high now, flashing their lightnings and echoing wild alarms of the far-off thunder; “and there lies Lincoln,” he said slowly with something of pathos in his tone.

He waited upon the porch, his thoughts going now to Oliver, now to Nora. “How strange they did not meet here to-day!” he was musing. “How strange I did not think of Kenhurst at the time, and that Nora and Oliver's sister were close friends there! It might have made a difference had they met, as indeed they shall meet.”

He went alongside a pillar and leaned against it, but he soon withdrew toward the

door, as the lightning flashes began to go across the sky overhead. "Yes, yes," he went on, "the two dear souls with one quest in common to them—the one great quest, the pearl of precious price for which the wise man will sell all, that he may possess it—they were here; and so near they stand in life, and yet what a world apart. And," he was going in the entrance, making for the little oratory, where he would spend an hour before the King of souls; "and perhaps—who knows, who knows?"

But who knows what was the precise thought in Father Campion's mind just at that moment, or what possibility flashed with a regret before his imagination? The veil of the future, even of the morrow, is not drawn aside; sufficient for the day is the knowledge thereof, for a merciful Providence has a care for the road beyond the turn. To that Providence did Father Campion, with unshaken confidence, entrust the days and the ways that stood ahead of Oliver and Nora. He claimed no prophetic vision; but he knew this, among his firmest principles of direction, that God holds back no grace

from the one who does his part. Days of struggle lay before the feet of his young clients, he could foretell that. They might have to experience sore trials of heart, as who does not, if he makes for the heights of life; and tears, surely not of weakness but of joyful heroism might yet burn their eyes. But there would be the support and strength of grace for all that might come, even if the final issue was to be frustrated.

But the old priest, with his years of experience, could not foresee as he went in out of the storm what would be taking place there at Glendalough at the end of the approaching scholastic year, when wedding bells would ring from the little college chapel, and Oliver and Nora, her arm on his, would come down the aisle and out to the campus to say farewell to Father Campion.

CHAPTER XI

KENNETH SHANKEE'S DIVORCE

WHEN Diarmid Gomez with his little boat party on the Sudbury was hurrying away from the approaching wrath of the storm to the cozy shelter of the cottage, a tempest of another kind was breaking over the head of Kenneth Shankee in Concord, driving him forth with terrible curses, back to his den (though we ought, out of reverence for others, to call it home) in his mother's lonely quarter of the city. He was not man enough to take his whipping and profit by it—as even a dog might do; he slunk away like a routed wolf. And when he was out of immediate danger, going down the street again to the cars, he struck up his attitude of affected dignity, a scornful nose in the air, his swollen sensuous lips drawn in, and the patches of muscle tightened on his face—all this to simulate a character which he was not, to veil with a seeming expression of lofty

thought or of determined will, his real self, which after all was not worth even this veneer of sham.

To simple straightforward persons like Diarmid Gomez and Oliver Plunket, inexperienced as they were in many of the undercurrents of life, because they kept out in the middle stream, these strained poses of an affected "cad" did not connote a career of hypocrisy and vice. A habit of judging people with charity was a trait of both Oliver and Diarmid. But there were circles in Shankee's acquaintance, where the jarring lines of pretense on his face were read like a book, and the criticism that was passed upon the mask was not a thing that is pleasant to hear. It was a face that betrayed the wild disorder of his mind and the unrestrained recklessness of his heart. The remarks that were current about him at the clubs—and not always behind his back either—must be left to those spicier atmospheres.

But to return to the storm that drove him out of Concord. You will recall the mention of the marriage that Shankee had figured in—the

ceremony, perhaps we may more fittingly call it, out of respect for what it feigned to be. He had been summoned to take his part in it under a threat of a round of bullets, "a rather rough kind of invitation," as he had the daring to say, while the revolver was pointed at him. The father of the young girl stood towering over Shankee that day, almost a year ago, and he had only one thought behind his wrath—to protect the reputation of his daughter and her unborn child, according to the conventions of the world. He had no concern about Shankee; far from him to think that he would retain Shankee as a son-in-law.

"You cur," he said, his angry eyes flashing down at the semblance of a man before him, for Kenneth Shankee's dignity now had melted away and left him the irresoluteness of a jellyfish; "you puppet of a man! You go through this ceremony and don't you blink an eye, or I will make both of them blink and stay shut forever. I don't want you for a husband of my daughter." He came nearer the cowering form and put a muscular hand on the quiv-

ering shoulder, "I wouldn't have you for such, nor would she now. But you've got to do every bit of what I tell you or I'll—" As he brandished the revolver he did not need to name his threat. "You'll stay here till I tell you to go. I'll tell you what to do then. Act your part now, you puppet; wear the mask that you have worn, you hypocrite. Don't leave the stage till I tell you, and then I will kick you off."

And so Kenneth Shankee during the months that followed lived a dog's life, standing always under the fear of the lash. He knew that the marriage ceremony was all a hollow mockery, no marriage at all, merely a sham piece of acting to keep disgrace out of the mouths of gossips in Concord. The contract was not binding, he knew well enough, neither party having an intention or a will behind the words. And to pronounce such words he knew to be a heinous sin. He had learned that much in his Catholic catechism, though long since he had thrown his catechism and its teaching to the winds. So he went through with the per-

formance; and one hour later he was listening to the following part of the program, that the unmarried girl's father had mapped out for him.

There were other illegitimate ways out of the difficulty. Shankee, like a murderer, had thought of one of them. But the father struck him back a cracking blow on the cheek; "I will not add murder to this, you rascal.

"Here, you cur!" the man said when they got within doors again, "I gave out that you were going west, both of you. Do you understand? Well, you are going west!" and he put a grim smile on his face, "West, yes, as far as Worcester, and then you are going north, up to a lumber camp at the top of Maine, where you won't do much harm—unless to yourself." And the smile seemed savage with scorn. "My brother is up there, and he is waiting for you. You understand? And you shall stay there till I tell you to return, you understand?" He pushed his poltroon against the wall and went on with his rapid talk. "I know you'll obey, for I've looked up something about you. I've

got a friend in town. I know some of the things you've done. You stole a watch, didn't you? a watch with the name of Clare Plunket in it, and the watch is in pawn waiting for you to come back with fifty dollars. And you signed a check in the name of Diarmid Gomez, didn't you, and presented it at the Branston Club, didn't you? didn't you? I could clap you in prison within an hour. But I will not take that course; let others do that when I get through with you."

He walked away, went up-stairs to see that his daughter was ready to go with him to the train. She, too, in her father's escort was going to Worcester, and then to spend some months with her aunt in a lonely little village in Virginia. There she might forget the ordeal of that day, and live on as happily as she could, under cover of the news that had been sent about the little town—that the newly married couple were to spend a year or more in the west. She had her father's loathing of the man whose name she would legally bear for a while. And she found some prospect of joy

in the thought that she would get back her own name after a year, as her father told her. She willingly undertook the penance that he imposed on her. A carriage was waiting; the three went out, dissembling, as they stood on the street before the curious villagers, an air of perfect happiness. Long before the year was over the girl returned to Concord and her little child of three months old was with her.

That was in the last week of July; two days later her father directed a telegram to his brother in Maine, with words that the operator could not understand: "Ship that dog back immediately."

And so it came to pass that Kenneth Shankee arrived in Boston on that very day when he met Diarmid Gomez, and hinted to him of magnificent voyages and wonderous adventures, receiving in return from the unsuspecting Diarmid a hearty invitation to come out to Lincoln and relate his travels to Nora and the little group there.

But the Munchausen plumes of Shankee met an angry man in Concord. His tilted nose

came down, and the affected lines in his face fell away into a blank stare. Weathered though he was by the winter cabin-life in Maine, and hardened by outdoor work, his heart and his arms turned coward again before the will that shook out bitter words of anger upon him.

"You've had a dose of work and of solitude, young man," the father began. "I hope that the experience put something good into you. Good or not, I have you here for the last time. You understand me?"

Kenneth attempted to affect a nonchalance; he even tried to smile and dared to ask about the daughter.

"Don't mention that name," said the man grabbing him by the throat.

He did not tell him that the daughter and her child were in the house at that very moment.

"I want to take farewell of you forever. I am quit with you: you may go back to your place in town. I entertain no hope about you, for I want to have none. Here is my plan and as soon as I get a sign of disapproval from you I will clap you into jail, you understand?"

Shankee stood against the side of a bookcase not daring to open his mouth.

The man came nearer and hissed out his words. "After two weeks I will send a petition for my daughter's divorce. I don't want your name hanging on her. But I am not going to make this a noisy affair. I want to spare her, not you. So nobody but this little village need know of it, excepting your people at home. I found out your mother's address, and I sent word to her about all these proceedings this morning. I held back out of pity for a woman's feelings, I assure you, but I felt it a duty to tell her. She will not circulate the news; perhaps that is some comfort for you to know."

Shankee looked up. At the prospect of escape from his present ordeal, something like a smile of delight—if only his heart could be joyful—crept up his face. He knew, of course, that there had been no marriage, but he knew well enough that any attempt of his to take a wife while the former contract was on the books in Concord would bring him behind

prison bars for bigamy. The perjury of it all he did not care about, for he had long since left the path of Catholic life.

"I hardly need say anything about religious scruples," the father resumed his address. "I have been looking into some private histories while you were away. I have heard that you were a Catholic once, and that your people after the death of a respected and honorable father made some effort to conceal their religious belief. But while I do not know much about that Church, I say that you are no more a Catholic than Martin Luther or Henry the Eighth; you can go off and start a religion as they did." Then he walked towards the door, and laid his hand on the knob. "One word more to sum up all. You shake the dust of this town from your feet. Keep away; keep safe away. It will not be good for your health if I ever hear of you or see you. In two weeks my little daughter will be free from your name. The court will wipe away the contract on account of—" His face showed white under his overhanging black eyebrows and the glar-

ing eyes, as the tone of disgust and repulsion shot out, "on account of your worthlessness and abandonment. We have to say," he added with savage sarcasm, "that your tempers were incompatible, and that you deserted her."

Then he opened the door and pointed Kenneth Shankee to the street, and quietly shut him out to the flashing lightning and roaring thunder without one word of pity.

Shankee quickly got under cover of a car and straightway struck up pompous pretense again on his face. He took the way to his mother's house, having nothing to spare in his purse for any costly stop on the way. The Maine woodsman had returned him to Concord with nothing but the railroad ticket and a dollar for some eatables along the road. Half of that dollar was gone by now, though he had eaten but one sandwich since morning.

His mother's house was on a little by-way off Charles Street. It was shut in by better houses and higher buildings; and while it was to the passing eye an obscure-looking thing it was a matter of pride to the poor deluded

family that lived there. The same sunshine and the same breezes that came down Commonwealth Avenue and Beacon Street fell in upon this house, and that was recompense enough for the aspiring mother, in supporting the countless disadvantages of the location. The atmosphere of the Back Bay was there; that was dearer to her than honey and milk. And the little garden at the rear of the house—had it not entertained celebrities in a day when Thackeray was the literary idol of cultured Boston? She would tell the story to those whom she invited to visit the place. Now and then a magazine would use a picture of it—“The garden attached to Shankee home.”

Kenneth, still holding up his face of dignity, stepped from the car and slunk down the little street. The storm had reached Boston and huge drops of rain that cut like hail began to pelt him in the face.

The street and its environment was familiar to him, but he could not feel that he was so near home. Opening an old-fashioned gate, covered with woodbine, he went in at the side

door without ringing the bell. He suspected that they would have locked the door in his face, had they seen him coming. In the dark room off the little hallway he saw three forms huddled together in the corner, his mother, as he knew, and his two sisters with their arms close about her. A terrible flash of lightning, followed quickly by a crash, lit up the room and showed every detail of the scene, the white faces of the three, full of grief and fear, looking across the room at the spectre.

They had been suffering all day, the mother going about the rooms shrieking, till towards evening she sank down with shattered nerves. The letter that she had received from Concord was hid in her bosom; but she did not tell the children what a sad, heart-breaking message it contained. Doubtless the two daughters conjectured that the letter had to do with some financial reverse. All the afternoon they had endeavored to console their mother, wiping away her tears and trying to say something that might be a ray of sunshine in their pitiable distress. But no alleviation came; rather the

torture in the mother's mind increased till now at evening, while the terrible storm lashed the air outside, she sat exhausted on the sofa, Fridolin and Gwendolyn, terrified and flushed with weeping, at her side.

"Mother, don't you know me?" Kenneth asked across the black gloom, as coolly as audacity could ask.

"O, my God!" the mother cried out, as she caught the well-known voice, and sat up frantically.

Kenneth stepped forward as if to approach them.

But the mother shrieked, and drawing her children closer to her, cried out, "Don't come near us. Keep away, you wretch—you worse than wretch—keep away!" Her voice arose as if from a sepulchre of despair. "Do you want the lightning to strike us all dead?" And she began to shake with gasping sobs on the verge of hysteria.

Then bringing back every feeling within her to her command, she stood up, wiping away her tears, and spoke out with determined scorn.

"You disgrace, you abominable wretch, leave this house, leave this city; leave us to our misery; but do not drive us to the grave."

Kenneth Shankee was the kind to show courage before defenseless women, and to speak insult even to his mother. He folded his arms and looked boldly across the room. "Shut up," he said, "you, you," he added with despicable emphasis, "you made me what I am."

The terrible words smote his mother's heart like a shot from the raging heavens. A fierce flash of lightning flung its spectral brightness into the room, and a terrific crash of thunder shook the walls of the house. The mother fell back to the sofa and swooned away in the arms of the elder daughter.

The other, little Gwendolyn, crying pitiously, stood up and approached her brother, taking his hands like another Antigone, and said between her sobs and tears, "Kenneth, please do come away and spare poor mother, come," and the sweet child tried to draw him towards the door. "I have something on the table for you; come, Kenneth." And her dear

little voice, shaking as if her heart were breaking, said again when they entered the dining-room, "and you'll go to bed then, won't you, Ken? And perhaps in the morning it will all be right."

A brave little angel she was as she pulled his head down and kissed him good night, and ran back to her mother. And it was the influence of these innocent words that kept Kenneth Shankee under cover of his mother's house that night; for wild as the raging storm was without, some evil spirit recalled to him the invitation he received from Diarmid Gomez early that morning. When he had satisfied his famine at the table, he went up to the room that had been his before the comedy a year ago of his Concord marriage.

CHAPTER XII

SMILING THROUGH TEARS

OUT in the little cottage in the Lincoln woods, the household party, after the fierce storm had passed away, appeared upon the porch to enjoy the cool, fragrant air that blew across the meadows and through the dripping pines. For awhile, as they sat there, the lingering reflections of the storm engaged their observing eyes. Nora went indoors and lit a lamp, and then coming to a window by the porch she took a volume from a shelf to read for the silent group a favorite poem. Line by line she went along by the true pictures in "The Squall," stopping now and then to explain to Margaret and Aileen some figurative allusions in the lines. Then having ended her reading she lowered the light and returned to the porch, coming close to her sisters so that she might repeat with them the

last lines of the poem, as they watched the flashes of lightning far away along the horizon:

"A good world, as it was,
And as it shall be: clear circumferent space,
Where punctual yet, for worship of their Cause,
The stars came thick in choir.

. . . the headland pine
Embossed on changing fire:
. . . close behind it, cooped
Within a smallest span,
In fury, to and fro and round and round,
The routed leopards of the lightning ran:
Bright, bright, inside their dungeon-bars, malign
They ran; and ran till dawn, without a sound."

Soon the clear stars began to appear in the open places in the sky; and the children, moving up and down the porch, began to call them out and count them; and growing tired of that they listened to the low sough of the evening wind through the trees, and tried to sing in unison with the gentle monotone. This they changed after a while to a melody with the beautiful words of an evening hymn to Our Lady. Nora and Molly sang a low alto to the children's treble, and Diarmid put in a

subdued bass. Nora rose at the conclusion of the hymn, and took the children in to repeat their prayers before they went up to their cots.

Little Margaret, going to give her good-night kiss to Diarmid and Molly, recalled the name of the invited Kenneth Shankee and said playfully, "Will you let us down if he comes? We should like very much to see a wax figure in a store window, as Molly called him."

"The rain must have spoiled him," said Aileen as she put her arm about Diarmid's neck.

When Nora returned to the porch, some minutes afterwards, the talk was still about Kenneth Shankee.

Molly said with a light laugh, "Diarmid has invited a young Ulysses out to see us, and to entertain us with an account of his wanderings on sea and land. Kenneth Shankee is the Ulysses." And Molly drew Nora towards her, saying, "You remember the wanderer of the Odyssey?"

Nora, with a quiet smile, at Molly's allusion to old school words, said, "Perhaps it is true

of Kenneth what Tennyson made his Ulysses say, 'I am a part of all I have met.'" And indeed, as they did not know, it was very true of Kenneth Shankee.

"I do not say that he is a great voyager," and Diarmid searched about for a phrase that should imitate Shankee's vocabulary, "a magnificent peregrinator, but he has been out of town for the past six or eight months; and with what he saw and with what he can invent, he ought to have enough matter for a library of dime novels."

"Full of savage Indians?" queried Nora, trying to appear keenly interested in the poor topic. "He may have some scalps to show us."

"None but his own," Diarmid said with some disdain in the backward shake of his head; "he talks big, but he's a mouse in action." And then, after a pause, "He ought to have some jolly good narrations however, even though in reality he has used only a small fishhook and thread to catch a few experiences. Amplification must have been a well-drilled

exercise when he went to school; he can spin a four-minute story out over an hour. He used to amuse us with his marvelous doings when he was at sea, 'before the mawst' as he used to say, though I think he never went beyond Plymouth on the water."

"And who are to be the other chevaliers that are to come to—" Molly looked towards Nora and took her arm, "to read the stories of Knights?"

Nora interposed, "Of course we may count on Oliver Plunket? I do want to see Clare, and I must write to her just the very minute Father Campion sends me her address."

"I'll ask him in the letter you write to Clare, or you ask him for me to come out. He will give us many evenings in town next winter." Diarmid smiled as he caught Molly's scrutinizing eye. "But he is a Senior at Glendalough; football, dramatics and studies may keep him so occupied as to give us very little of him, however."

"Well, he doesn't talk big anyway," Molly, as she spoke, laughed lightly, "except when

he played Falstaff, last winter." And turning towards Nora she looked brightly into her face. "Do you remember the day you and Oliver sang the duet under the elm at school? We were sitting about, and Dora Cleydon and Dorothy Kiely stood up and called 'En-core.'"

Nora was not to be outdone in the simple reminiscence of school-days. "But you and Diarmid gave the first example of that long before. Do you remember, Derm, you were blushing like anything, one day in the little parlor at the Avenue school in town, as Mother Caldwell let you in on one of our congés to the piano, with a few of us? There now," she said with a wave of her hands as if she had won a great argument.

"But we never sang as well as you and Oliver did that day at Kenhurst. I will leave it to Philomena and Helen and Ruth, who were visiting us from Elmwood. You ask them when they come again."

And so the little parley went on, nothing greater, nothing less—the chatty talk of these

two young women about school-days, the heroic times of a sunny youth.

Diarmid listened, or at times puffing away on his pipe, let his mind wander off to some of his business concerns. But he caught frequent mention of Oliver's name and of incidents in which he took part when Molly and Nora were girls at the academy on the Avenue. Now they told of the pleasant winter afternoons when with some of their companions they went out to the lake near St. Merville's, and how Oliver would be called aside by Clare, away from his game of hockey, and commanded to help the girls in their skating exercises.

"Mother," said Agnes Oakly, one of the little girls at the school, to the nun at the door (Molly was recalling the incident to Nora), "Mother, I learned how to make a figure eight this afternoon. Ollie Plunket showed me how."

"Why, Agnes," said Madame Cadey, pretending astonishment, "I thought you learned arithmetic long, long ago."

Agnes, looking serious at the nun's apparent ignorance of the technical term, raised her little hand in protest, "I mean, Mother, the figure eight on the ice; you make it with your skates, this way;" and her body swayed with the motion that should accompany a skater, though her feet did not glide over the rug. "And Ollie is going to teach us the Dutch roll," she went on jubilantly, while the other girls smiled at the picture Agnes was making.

"I hope the action is prettier than its name," quietly remarked the nun. At which the little group laughed, even as Nora and Molly were now doing on the porch at Lincoln.

So the simple, undramatic talk of the two unpretending young women whiled away the evening. They had brought from their convent school, like most girls who have had such an education, the light happy heart of innocence, and yet that serenity of mind and strength of will that mark a convent woman for a person of character in face of any exulting success or depressing difficulty. Nora, for instance, had schooled herself in that wise.

She had learned on many a day that sorrow and joy are in the moral life as light and shadow, and that "sweet are the uses of adversity." And she kept in her memory two lines that Father Campion had quoted in his retreat at Kenhurst long ago:

"The tasks in hour of insight willed,
Can be through hours of gloom fulfilled."

And now, though she is not plotting for a throne in some old continental empire, or acting the belated princess before a tyrannical father, or a magical godmother, she has a problem of greater moment in her life, romantic yet real, touching eternity, yet here and now in close contact with the earth. Her sorrow, now that she had wiped away tears of death over father and mother, is indeed a great one. She cannot, according to present prospects, go to the convent, and follow a manner of life to which her highest impulses have been summoning her. But she is ready to accept the duty that circumstances have put upon her; for she has learned to call such circumstances

the dispensations of Providence. And looking out upon her future with eyes of faith, she will know how to receive disappointment even with a joyful heart.

The first day of trial is ended, as she and Molly play with childish talk on the porch under the fragrant pines and the stars that glimmer down through the openings. Yet she has started with a brave heart to rearrange her thoughts and feelings to the new conditions that are to be hers. In times past she had cultivated, as far as the routine of her home life would permit, a disposition for a quiet unobtrusive solitude. The care of her younger sisters had brought to her a sort of maternal regard, a seriousness that went easily with her other thoughts; and this devotedness to home duties was sufficient excuse for not accepting the constant invitations to the social gatherings of her friends.

Now, at the close of the day of embassy, the mission upon which with a heavy heart she had gone to Glendalough, she was endeavoring to hold her own in the innocent banter with

Molly and Diarmid. She smiled as heartily as her heart would let her, when she retired within doors, calling back, "We shall enjoy the Knights of the Round Table this winter, the wonderful traveler, Kenneth Shankee, and Clare's dear brother, Oliver, and all the others."

She was smiling. But they did not see her, as she closed the door, put her hands to her eyes to feel the tears that she thought had come up. She lit the lamp and then, keeping her grief to herself, went up to a little prie-dieu near the children's cot.

CHAPTER XIII

A HERBARIUM FOR WEEDS

SOcial conditions affect human life and character as the soil and temperature bear on the vegetation. That is a truth so widely recognized, and the saying of it so trite, that we must almost apologize for repeating it to a generation eager for new things. Yet such a bit of hackneyed knowledge did not seem to be known to Kenneth Shankee's mother, or, if she had ever made any observation in that quarter and had even a germinal realization of it, she is all the more culpable for having taken a path diametrically the opposite.

Mrs. Shankee ought to have known that an oak does not thrive in a hothouse, and that the tender plants so carefully nourished in a gardener's acre, will seldom hold out against the hot sun, or the cold damp winds on a wild moor. Within a stone's throw of her own

window she could have seen the long line of perishing magnolias that the city florist had transplanted from their native Georgia, unable, even with all the overcoatings of straw, to endure the fierce blasts that swept down Commonwealth Avenue, from December to April.

Yet Mrs. Shankee at the death of her husband broke down the walls of prudence and the blessed barrier that conscience puts before one's feet, and tried to set her children in a garden dear to her eyes. The father of these three children, true to the very first laws of life, had planned otherwise.

John Shanahy—the family name before his wife changed it to Shankee, when she moved towards the Back Bay—was a man worthy of the eulogies that were said of him. Look down the columns of the paper at the time of his death, and you will see what magnificent praise the city in many quarters spoke of him. Father Campion's discourse over the bier was not a lengthy one—it was his custom to speak briefly on such occasions; but it was a solid

tribute to the worth of the man, who had been a Captain in the Twenty-Ninth Massachusetts, belonging to the Second Brigade, under Brigadier-General Meagher in the Civil War. And his old surviving comrades who were in the church that day were quick to appreciate the picture of the soldierly life that the priest drew, the soldierly duties that John Shanahy fulfilled so well to Church and State through all his years.

“The soldier of duty in daily life—we loved him,” said the Governor who came down from the State-house to attend the funeral. He was standing with head uncovered waiting to see the old veterans pass out. Oliver Plunket’s father and old Brother Neville of Glendalough were near him as he spoke.

Now when John Shanahy died and had lain but a month in the grave his poor children got up one morning and stood face to face with danger of a horrible form. They were too young at the time to shrink from the monster or to realize what a terrible revolution was preparing now to shake their lives to the very

foundations of their souls. The threatening danger was not from financial difficulties; the wolf was not at the door. John Shanahy had built up a good store of worldly wealth, and handed it down, against "the rainy day," to his wife and children. Moreover, the widow received a substantial pension from the government at the old veteran's death.

It was the poor deluded mother who invited the peril to that home. She was obsessed by the foolish desire to get herself and her children into what she called the "social circle," which was made up of the most distinguished names in the society of Boston.

To think high things of that section of the city was but common sense. To refuse to recognize all that was good there—the culture, the devotion to art and literature and to the cause, if not of supernatural charity, at least of philanthropy, would be to take sides with the vagrant socialists who hold forth on the Boston Common every Sunday afternoon. Up and down the broad avenues where the élite (the word was a favorite to the lips of

Mrs. Shankee) lived in wealth and social honor, there were men and women whose deeds, all in the spirit of courtesy and Christian modesty, were sufficient refutation for the noisy rantings of lawless socialists. More than one example had come to Mrs. Shankee's observation,—alas! to her misunderstanding of the noble actions of people whom she aspired to know. One or two of these examples that should have enlightened her, we may stop to mention.

For instance: from one of the most palatial residences on the first hill in Brookline—an Acropolis towards which Mrs. Shankee's ambitious eyes turned with the look of adoration—came a gentle mother almost every day to minister to some destitute families whom she knew in the great metropolis. One of them, a poor woman who had in earlier days been a sort of seamstress in this Brookline home, lost her eldest son in death; and her kind patroness came down from her home on the wealthy height, not to cast a piece of gold at the poor mother's door, but to put herself at the serv-

ice of her former seamstress. Mrs. Shankee was watching from behind her curtained window across the way in dumb amazement, as the Brookline lady drove down to the little house of death and appeared again after a while with the little sorrowing sisters, to take them off to her dressmaker—and all this done in a whisper and with a heart of genuine sincerity.

And again one day as Mrs. Shankee was shopping at the bright quarter on Tremont Street, she had cause for further amazement when she saw a fashionable carriage from a mansion on Glenwood Terrace drive up. A bright young girl, holding her mother's arm, stepped out. Mrs. Shankee, her eyes pretending to study some special articles among the laces in the shop window, was taking in the manners of the two newcomers. Lo! they stopped as they were crossing the walk; they had met an old servant of theirs, one who had been their gardener years before. Their gracious questions and their hearty interest in the news they had of their old servant was

sweet to hear, though to Mrs. Shankee and to her parvenu spirit the sight of such courteous condescension and charitable politeness to an humble servant was something surpassing understanding.

Such examples are trifling indeed, and they might have sufficed to show a deluded upstart that men and women of that "social circle," which was a golden calf to Mrs. Shankee's idolatry, are not cut away from the great continent of human fellowship. They may have South Sea Islands wherein they move by themselves amid the tropical vegetation of their social conventions. But at least they are one with the race; they come back to take the hand of their fellowmen, to praise endeavor, to pity the grieving, to show gratitude, and perhaps, first of all, to lighten their own burdens and to ease their own hearts of pain by being charitable to others.

Mrs. Shankee went wrong in all this, otherwise we would not parade such sentiment here. She had a distorted notion that society was a little paradise all by itself, where superior be-

ings dwelt, as the fabled gods on Mount Olympus. No sooner were the funeral meats cold after the burial of her husband than she brought forth her silly plans, and marked out the fearful pathways that, she fancied, led to the gods and goddesses. A real estate agent found her gullible; he did not need to call his glib tongue into such service, for the woman took the house almost after his first paragraph.

"You can look out from the upper windows to the Public Garden," he said, striking at what he knew would be captivating. "On the right you see Trinity and Emmanuel, prominent places as you know for the élite on Sunday. And the garden, my dear madame, the garden is perhaps one of the most historic in Boston. Thackeray, you know, read a chapter from one of his masterly novels there. Bret Harte pitched quoits there with Mark Twain, and the Count de Rien planted a gooseberry bush over by the west wall. I have some excellent photographs of the garden, should you want them. The magazines, you know, will

ask for illustrations of old Athenian days in Boston," and he smiled as he added, "in the Shankee garden."

And the Shankee garden it straightway became. And then the little children were put through a drill of parvenu etiquette. They were not to associate with the children of the neighborhood. They must try to take their recreation by themselves, and no street but those between Commonwealth Avenue and Beacon Street should have the press of their precious feet. Sad, silent, and alone, though she did not put it that way, must they keep to the little garden till some fairy godmother should throw a prince or princess over the wall, who might steal them away. Mrs. Shankee would even hold open the gate for so honorable an elopement.

Then came the days and the nights of this terrible ordeal, the wrenching of these young susceptible children away from all that was natural to their lives, hammering them under the yoke of artificial conduct and ideals. It

froze up the very founts of sunny youth, and left them to struggle up the icy mountains where there was nothing bright or invigorating, even though, when such conditions belong by the issues of life to some people, hardihood and nobility and cheerfulness go up with them, as among the Alpine snows one may hear the music of merry rills and see the inspiring beauty of the edelweiss.

But Kenneth Shankee and his little sisters, Fridolin and Gwendolyn (new names given to his sisters), were being fitted for nothing that makes for worth in life. The fountains of affection, of sincerity, of very truth of conduct were being dried up within them. A sham hauteur crept up their faces and into their bearing; and with it came insincerity and deceit, and the full flower of the poisonous life of hypocrisy.

Mrs. Shankee had not lost all fear of the laws of God, so she did not throw overboard all the practises of her religion. But she minimized them as far as she could; and in the

matter of the obligatory attendance at Mass on Sunday, she went with her children to an obscure little chapel in the North End, where she might not be recognized by eyes that were, after all, unconcerned about her religious beliefs. She withdrew the children from their Catholic schools, where the father had sent them. Had John Shanahy lived, Kenneth would have entered St. Moville's with Diarmid Gomez, and after that Glendalough, while Oliver Plunket was at the prep. school. And the two daughters would have been trained to Catholic womanhood in some convent nearby. But the mother had her worldly reasons, and her children were to suffer for them. What havoc the irreligious education made or might have made in the hearts of the two girls, we need not speak of; they belong to womanhood after all, and we must give them the chivalry of silence. Moreover, Gwendolyn was too young to feel these unnatural conditions, and her youth was her guardian across that abyss.

Kenneth, on the other hand, came out of his preparatory school fitted for anything but

honor and right. The higher and greater things that affect the soul and its keeping for eternity went by the wall entirely, and yet the world, which he learned to serve, whipped him in due time from its door.

CHAPTER XIV

A SCOFFER OF DREAMS

THERE are points of the compass in the moral life; even the untutored savage of the forest knows that in some degree. And Kenneth Shankee, long before he went the broad and easy way to disgrace and infamy, received salutary intimations of the perilous places, a warning voice of conscience that cried out in angry protest against the direction his young life was taking.

While he was yet attending his prep. school (he was not much beyond his sixteenth year) he had an experience that should have helped to rescue him, if he were at all susceptible to the premonition. Up to that time he had not played "the game," as he called a certain manner of life, very heavily. His small allowance of money, at times a mortification to him, so meagre it appeared for his considerable person, slipped through his fingers like water.

After a while he did not scruple to appropriate portions of his sister's purse. Once or twice he startled the inmates of his house with the scent of strong drink, as he came in for the week end; and on a few occasions, being in a heated talk over his mother's demur, he had been known to curse with great facility. Once he dared to pawn a bit of silver plate belonging to his mother to get enough money for his share in a "night" that was to be held by his class. It was a humiliating way to support his airs; but the airs had to be kept up, and Shankee must employ any means to that end. His mother was at last growing fearful, and had begun to call him to account for his extravagances.

Such were some of his misdemeanors, before he was out of his teens. And if he could exhibit his tendencies thus in the green wood what should he venture to do in the dry?

His sense of right, however, did not die with a flash. Habits and customs are slow to form and grow, and they keep their roots long in character, even where they have long been

trampled under foot. And howsoever wide of the beaten path of rectitude a man may go, the other air will breathe at times of holier things that were in his heart, as they were in Kenneth Shankee's in youthful years. Promptings born of the natural law, at least, will be whispered up in unlooked-for places and times; and external graces, as well as those internal illuminations from the unfailing bounty of God, strike upon the sight of every wanderer from the cradle to the grave. The simple chatter of a child, for instance, has been known to drive a murderer from his intended crime, as the corrupting hand of death upon the brow of one who was a queen waved a young duke away from his worldly pastimes to the coarse garments of penance and poverty.

And Kenneth Shankee, we may be sure, had the urgent whispering of a voice within him, warning him off from the abyss to which he was headed. Perhaps it was from an outraged conscience that a visitor was sent to him once in the night-time, a long while ago, if you

reckon by deeds and not by days—anyway months before the disgraceful alliance in Concord.

He narrated the incident to an old Brother at Glendalough one afternoon, not on the principle that an open confession is good for the soul, but for the purpose, so it seemed, of arousing curiosity in a probable believer in dreams.

He came out to Glendalough that far-off afternoon to "borrow" some money from Oliver Plunket. And entering by Clare Terrace, with his supercilious nose aloft, he met Brother Neville and asked, as if he were an inspector of a School Board, "What time will the youngsters be dismissed?"

"You've a half hour to wait," was the reply, given with staccato emphasis. For the old man in one short glance took the measure of the young pretender, and added to himself, "What an awful job the poor boy must have to keep his face screwed up that way!"

Brother Neville, now in his sixtieth year, was one of the characters at the College,

though his humble work lay nowhere near the classrooms or academic halls. His was the care of the grounds. Yet when his work was finished and he was not at his prayer, he found opportunity to indulge his heart with bits of learning that he picked up in various quarters, sometimes out of books and again, indeed most frequently, from short conversations with passers-by, boys or men. Countless Latin phrases he knew by heart, and at opportune times he flung off one of these to the boys who thoroughly enjoyed the quaint manner and the aptness of the quotation. He could speak in Gaelic, and he knew much about the history of "the old country." And having been through the Civil War (side by side with John Shanahy, as we said, and near to Oliver Plunket's father) he had no end of interesting stories for the students when they came on him, unoccupied out on one of the terraces. His Gaelic knowledge, too, afforded much entertainment and some instruction among his young auditors.

"What a beautiful Irish name you have!" he

said one day to Oliver, proceeding then to tell him of the great archbishop, the Irish martyr that answered to the name "years ago at home in Ireland."

"And how your father liked the soldier in that saint," he added, to let Oliver know what might be the origin of the selection of his first name.

And on another day, when kindly John Shanahy (as the Brother called him) came out to Glendalough with little Kenneth, Brother Neville took the lad by the hand, saying, "What a way the Scotch changed that dear old Saint's name, Kenneth!" he leaned over to the uplifted face of the boy; "why that's the name they gave to an Irish missionary. Saint Canice was he in Ireland, and he went away to labor among the Scots, and now they call him Saint Kenneth."

Shankee on that distant day seemed delighted to know that he was so connected, that he bore a name that was known for praise in some quarter of the world, and he was boy enough to want to emulate his namesake, when

that innocent emotion entered his heart. But as he stood there by the old Brother's side years after, having asked for Oliver Plunket, he recalled the incident (a manner of mind he detested, since he rarely if ever allowed himself to look back at the past, fearful of chiding voices) and he shuddered now lest the garrulous old man might discover again any trace of Irish in his name. He had for years endeavored to pass for anything but one of kin to an Irishman.

To escape recognition or even the possibility of it, he turned from the Brother. But he might have spared himself the useless trouble. He had a face and bearing now that even the keen-eyed Brother would fail to challenge as having any lineament of the Gael about it, or any vestige of the bright, candid, youthful countenance that looked up into his eyes that day at Glendalough five years ago.

"I'll show you towards the office, my young man," said Brother Neville, making as if for the central building of the group. "Or perhaps you prefer to wait here?" he asked tenta-

tively. "There's a seat yonder by the fountain."

Kenneth followed the gesture and bowed with something like a grunt. Then concluding that he was out of danger of being recognized by this old friend of his father, he drawled out a question in his usual blatant manner: "I say, sir, I say—er—tell me—ah—if you please, you believe, I suppose—er—in dreams out here, don't you?"

Brother Neville did not appear amazed at the question though it was intended that he should. He lifted his kindly face and with a gentle smile, answered, "Some dreams come true." And would that he added, "Take sure note of that, my young man."

"Yaas, I say, I thought you'd say so, don't you know. I thought you'd have something like that to respond," gabbled Shankee. And his head went up higher, and something that was perhaps meant to be a smile turned his face into a caricature.

Brother Neville paid no heed to the affected scorn, if such it was; he could not be upset by

so ridiculous a specimen of smartness. His serene manner immediately acted upon the young snob.

Shankee straightened out the lines on his painful-looking visage, took a different tone, somewhat more deferential, and said, "I should like to tell the thing to you, that is, if you don't mind."

The Brother, not a little surprised at the absence of drawling syllables in this last utterance, motioned him to a seat that looked out upon the lakes at the foot of the hill. "Sit down and go on with the tale, if it pleases you," he said somewhat imperatively, yet not without an assuring kindness. He felt able but too pitiful to beat down with one syllable the characterless weakling before him.

And it is not the substance or the manner of the telling of the dream that is worthy of paper. Better things are told in Kipling or in any other book that contains the acute psychology of a delirium tremens. But on the supposition that Kenneth Shankee's misguided career may have a mite of interest, his

dream may be adduced, if only to prove the old adage that coming events cast their shadows before. Moreover, Shankee has just heard from Brother Neville that some dreams come true.

CHAPTER XV

THE DREAM

“**Y**OU’LL have plenty of time,” said the Brother, when the bell struck out the last quarter of the final school hour. “It will take the young men some minutes to get out-of-doors.”

“Well,” Shankee opened up his narrative, and it was clear from the very first word that he was eliminating his excess of nasality, “I was walking down the Avenue.” (The “Avenue” merely signified any aristocratic pavement in the Back Bay.) “Yaas, down the Avenue the other evening. And as I jaunted along—it was little after dusk—a man drew up alongside of me and saluted me quite graciously.” (Shankee tried to imitate the thing he called graciousness.) “But for the life of me, I’ll be—I’ll be confounded if I could tell his name.”

Shankee endeavored to laugh at what he

considered a funny situation; but his effort died in a low cackle. His heart was foreign to the exercise of laughing, and his facial muscles refused to obey the insincerity.

The old Brother looked aside quizzically, not wishing to offend charity by his look which said, "God help us, but what ails this silly loon beside me?"

"I had some sort of feeling, don't you know," Kenneth went on, "that I met the fellow before, had been with him a score of times here and there in our world, at several parties in and out of town. I did surely recognize the cut of his clothes—swell, you know, a dresser, I assure you, every inch of him. And the manners, perfect, better than books can show them, a gentleman right to his finger tips."

"*Factus ad unguem*," said the Brother who could not resist the temptation the remark gave him to pull forth one of his Latin phrases, even before this insipid audience.

"Yaas, don't you know," came the drawl; "a gentleman every way, manners and clothes and all that, perfect. Yet for the life of me

I couldn't make out who he was, couldn't name him, though I felt sure that I had rubbed elbows with him many a time about town. I certainly had. And yet much as I wanted to recall his name and more about him, why I simply could not, that's all about it."

"Well," said the Brother, waiting patiently for some definite exit to all these repetitions.

"Well," the belated voice went on, "we walked down the Avenue together, chatting, don't you know, about this and that and so forth. I must say that I was surprised; my friend seemed to know so much about me, knew all the fellows by name, and our little escapades, in a way that was a puzzle to me. But he was extremely polite, well-mannered, brought up the subjects very nicely, recounted some jolly times we had together, though I must not repeat his language here," Shankee bowed with a grin. "And then he asked me to spend the evening with him."

"Did you go?" the Brother put his question rather abruptly, though he had not intended at the start to interrupt the speaker. But he had

his own thoughts about the "friend" of whom Kenneth was speaking.

"Well, I'm afraid you'll think me a devilish hard sort of chap," he attempted a blasé touch to his attitude. "I had not been to church for a half year or more. School, don't you know, is one thing, our school, I mean, and going to church is quite another. Well, that was a Saturday night, the last night before the end of the Easter season, and something got into my head to make me think of picking up a bit, a sort of fear it was about the state of things—the way my soul was—and that I should step into church and get things back to rights."

Brother Neville by this was absorbed in the story, not in its manner of telling, but in its matter.

"My very sociable friend came close to me, when I hinted at the church, and—aa—without forcing his kind invitation too much, he did insist again on my going with him for the evening. I could get to church afterwards, he said, and he took my arm, still going on with his jolly talk. But something, I assure

you it was unusual with me, something made me a bit fearful, yaas, indeed, a bit afraid," and he was sincere enough in this, as one could see by the change from the stilted tone to accents that were perfectly natural. "I can't tell just what I reasoned out as the cause of the fear; but I was squirmy and downright afraid. My suspicions were not foolish, as you see, sir; for when we came to a dark and deserted street, a way to cut short towards the church, and as we were crossing over a railroad bridge, my friend, the person who had been so extremely polite all this time, struck me on the head, and tried to fling me over to the tracks, just as a fast express shot by."

That Shankee was affected by this brief glimpse of an experience that he had met with was openly evident from the way he trembled, and held to the back of the iron settee. Then, as if to stifle the play of feeling—as he always choked out any reminiscence that might have been a medicine to his life—he looked up and put on again the affected manner. "But I held to the railing and yelled while the train

swept past. My friend, with a fiendish stare, fled off into the darkness quicker than I could tell where."

He paused and waited to see what the old Brother might say by way of comment to the story. Silent and apparently deep in his reflections, Brother Neville sat by him, and turned his eyes away towards the gleaming wavelets on the lake below.

Shankee gave one of his spiritless laughs, as he began to say, "Well, that is the dream. Yaas, don't you know, the dream I mentioned." And with deeper gutturals doubtless for sarcasm, he added, "And what do you read me in my dream?"

Brother Neville kept a silence that was a rebuke to impudence. He was not a fool to play interpreter for Shankee's dream, though he would have been no fool if he spoke out just the view he got of Shankee's mental and moral status. It was to himself he whispered, "The boy is father to the man' is an old saying; but God help the man that is to turn out of this lad." Then on second thought resolv-

ing to speak to Kenneth, he glanced towards him and with slow, impressive emphasis, said, "My young man, suppose you were at a play in the theatre and you saw some noble action, some incident that passed there before your eyes, a character that you should imitate or a dangerous situation that should be avoided, wouldn't you allow yourself to take some benefit from the thing, imaginary though it be? You might say that the action upon the stage is entirely fictitious, absolutely unreal, no foundation in historical fact—no truer, you see, than what passes in a dream. And nevertheless you would let your heart profit from the scene upon the stage. And what is to prevent a man from learning a lesson even from a dream?"

Now, Kenneth Shankee was listening to this, and, as far as he could be said to think, he was thinking hard. Like many another who came to scoff and remained to pray, he might have turned his thoughts towards reverence and salutary reflection after the simple observance that the Brother made. But he

had removed his heart from such a course; he knew not any longer the art of looking back for the good the retrospect might do. Like a house with no windows towards the valleys of Yesterday, but all its outlook down the road of To-morrow, his eyes fixed ahead on the hazy pathway before his feet.

The bell, sounding a warning for dismissal, rang out from the College. Brother Neville stood up with his courteous bow, and pointed towards the Hall. "We have yet five minutes to wait. Oliver will have some field-work for the evening. You'll stay to see him? What a man he is in the sports—his father was a soldier and loved the field."

Both walked on, silent for a few moments. Then suddenly as the thought came to him, Brother Neville turned back to the talk of the dream. "By the way, my young man, now that I recall it, perhaps you read in yesterday morning's paper of a terrible death, the young college man, over there," pointing across the city, "who was hurled out of a window. Perhaps you have had thoughts about the unfortu-

nate boy, though *his* ending was no dream."

"Can't say that I have," answered Shankee, his eyes inquiring for a fuller account of the affair.

"Why, just this," the Brother went on, concealing any show of employing the news as a personal application to present company, "some young student at a big college over there," again his hand motioned to a horizon beyond Boston, "was found early in the morning, dead on the sidewalk, his brains dashed out upon the curbstone."

"Yaas, come to think of it, I did hear something like that," answered Kenneth, looking a little bewildered. "Ah, let me see—it wasn't murder, was it?"

"No, they do not think so," came the quiet answer. "It seems that the young fellow was out the night before at a jolly dinner with some very sociable friends. The strongest part of the meal was drink. They managed to get the noisy lad home, and bestowed him carefully in his sleeping room, high up in one of their fashionable dormitories. They kept up re-

spectable appearances. And when they got him in, his intimate friend locked the door and took away the key. And somehow or other, during the night, the poor fellow in his drunken stupor left his bed, and however he managed to climb up to the little window—it was six feet above the floor, a bedroom window—he succeeded in reaching it. And there in the morning was he, crushed and lifeless, out on the pavement, as the policeman came up who found him there.”

“Pushed out?” Shankee taken off his guard almost shouted the question. He felt at once the force of the parallel to his dream. But he shook away the suggestion immediately; and with a collected countenance again, he asked in a low voice, “Do you think that he could have been shoved out of the window?”

“I told you that the key of the room, after the door was locked, was put in the keeping of a friend,” answered the Brother, not however as one persisting on a point. “Only a spirit could get through the barred door,” he was smiling, “and no good spirit would have

sent that poor fellow in his drunken state before the judgment-seat of God."

Kenneth Shankee was not anxious to be preached at. He asked a question or two about the direction towards the Hall. Then with his scorn or sarcasm, he moved onward, away from the Brother, saying, "And so my dream does not mean anything?"

"Why, as I said," the Brother replied with a benign look, "some dreams come true. And it was told us long ago that the devil goes about sometimes as an angel of light. He can use the respectable appearances of the world for his own purposes."

A helpful reflection might have come to Kenneth Shankee from all this, as he rode away that afternoon, down the boulevard in the electric car. But having the money that he succeeded in getting with pompous, lying words from Oliver Plunket, his heart was beating high with prospects of a gay evening before him. His eyes were eager for the darkness of the night.

He caught the shimmer of the Charles River

here and there in the openings along by Beacon Street; the bright glancing waters, so cheerful in the afternoon sun, not the cold pitiless waters of that night when he was to be flung underneath their spectral blackness.

CHAPTER XVI

AN AMBASSADOR

MEDALS of honor are struck off by a grateful government and set with ceremony upon the breasts of men who stand up in some moments of peril and ward off danger from the country. The deed of bravery may be of an entirely negative character, as, for instance, standing at a pass in the mountains—merely standing there and doing nothing more. Such was the meritorious action of an old soldier of the Crimea, who laughed heartily one evening, as our band of college musicians came down the country road to serenade him. And when our leader asked the old veteran to show us the medal that his French general gave (when a French medal was still worth the getting) he laughed merrily, and waved us away with a phrase in his native language. But he brought forth the great prize to satisfy boyish wonderment, saying, "*Eh bien, mes*

enfants, and what for I cannot say, me. They tell me to stand one night up the road in the hills and watch. I stand, me, and watch; and yet no come that way any one that evening. And when come the morning, come *le capitaine*—also, and he say, *le capitaine*, he say he tell *mon général*, and I get one *médaille*. *La voici, mes enfants*. But what for they give, I cannot say, me,” and he laughed merrily again, tears in his eyes, however, especially when we struck up a tune that was older than the battle of Sebastopol.

And to protect the rights of one single subject a government will drain its exchequer and, if it has the right heart, fling its last fragile boat against a host of battleships to show its dying protest to the tyrant. At every port, as in every capital, it places its guards of consuls and ambassadors to represent their country's interests even to the minutest details. They are men of honor abroad who keep their legations; and their national banner keeps their plenipotentiary word sacred and inviolate. From common citizens at home their of-

fice raises them to the right hand of emperors and kings. To harm them is to smite the cheek of a nation; to honor them is to elate its watchful heart.

Now all this is, in a measure, a long way to apologize for stopping to say a word about Father Campion, before we go on to hear the ringing of the wedding bells, and to the issues that Father Campion shall see for his young clients.

Father Campion, though a simple priest with no other uniform than his black cassock and biretta, is, howsoever otherwise the vision of worldly eyes regards him, an ambassador with power to represent a King, in the Kingdom that is of God, the souls of men. He held his commission faithfully through many years. Though no badge of temporal honor decorates his cloth (albeit in many a civic quarter his name stood forth in eulogy, even from men not of his Faith) his heart forgot not the blessed words of One Who could not speak in vain: that they are blessed and shall shine as stars in the Kingdom of heaven who teach

others unto justice. And taking him from his general life-work, so many years in the classroom of Glendalough, and a veteran missionary at the call of bishops and his fellow-priests, we find him now occupied with the great problems at work in the minds of Nora Gomez and Oliver Plunket, yes, even of Kenneth Shankee. On him, in a large measure, lies the direction of these young lives, a terrible responsibility, surely, one whose magnitude we may estimate when we consider that an ambassador will see his nation to war before he will allow hurt upon one acre of his countryman's possession. Yet here Father Campion has to do with the very heart-throbs of his clients, not merely about hills and harbors, but with thoughts that affect character and lifelong success or failure, with questions that run for final judgment into Eternity. He will not look at them like a Calvinist. He knew in Christian truth that there is no sword of Damocles hanging over the head; no Moloch beyond the darkened road waiting for victims. He knew of One Who would not crush the bruised reed,

nor quench the smoking flax, but will fan a little hope into bright confidence. If you meet any of his former boys you will hear of his lecture against the pessimism of certain pieces in literature.

Father Campion had come to his task, even as from the first days of his priesthood he labored to be, fitted for the post where now he is stationed. Long since had he ruled out of the court of his mind the inordinate voices of prejudice and passion. His decisions must always remain fallible, but they will have the best wisdom of one who gives witness impartially by the help of God.

He had a favorite topic among his discourses to young people. If the occasion was a religious setting, as in the chapel during a retreat, he led off with the text that told of the wise man, "building a house, who digged deep and laid the foundation upon a rock." Or if it were in the classroom, over some passage in a secular author, an utterance that is often freighted with the very pulsations of humanity, Father Campion would make the

last minutes of a class hour thrill with his commentary, as he turned it into an important lesson in the philosophy of life. He was a teacher and knew the value of profane literature—that it gives witness to conscience and the heart of man.

One such passage came up in a reading from Shakespeare: and I have put together from jottings that a student made in his notebook, one paragraph of Father Campion's earnest talk over that line. Doubtless the substance of that day's brief discourse had fallen into the attentive ears of Nora Gomez and Oliver Plunket when they listened in their earlier school-days to the retreat talks of Father Campion. Both of them had, as we know, taken the thought deep into the council chamber of their hearts: but as we shall see, when they meet at Lincoln or Manchester, or in the long evenings at Nora's house in town, neither of them will allude to the topic, in their frequent talk about Father Campion. There are, after all, some solitary places deep in the human breast, where we allow no one, not even the next in

kin or affection, to enter in. Above some recess or other of memory each one of us has written "*Secretum meum mihi.*"

And Kenneth Shankee, had his staunch Catholic father remained alive, might have had the same wise advice to ponder upon. He fell far from that possibility after his father's death. His deluded mother, beset with a craze for social recognition, as we have already noted, withdrew her children from their proper environment, and starved their souls not only in matters that count in the supernatural life but in truth and sincerity of purpose and in all that ennobles character.

But we must return for a moment to the notebook which contained a summary of a discourse. It was over a well-known saying out of one of the poets to which Father Campion drew the attention of his class one afternoon. I find that stated in the little penciled notes from which I am quoting. I will not go beyond these brief jottings nor, indeed, would I bring them in here at all, were it not that you are anxious to know some of the influ-

ences that have been at work in the formation of Oliver Plunket's character; for again, I repeat, it is very likely that he heard these identical words in his time at St. Moville's. Moreover, you may see here at the end of the notebook these words, "Thank you, Ted.—Plunket," written I take it, when Oliver had read through a Senior's notes, which had been kindly provided him later at Glendalough. The passage that brought forth the commentary on that school-day in Father Campion's class was this: "The child is father of the man."

And the teacher's words, as we piece them together, read thus:

There is one supreme moment in life when in full truth we can appeal to that line of the poet. The child is father of the man: that is the moment when the youth with full determination and volition chooses that pathway in life which is to be his through all his years of sun and cloud till he comes to the valley of the shadow of death. Such a choice, we say, must be looked at clearly by the wide, impartial eyes

of the mind and be elected by the free impartial suffrages of the will. . . . And such an election is not the common occurrence among men and women in the ordinary run of life. . . . (O, that youth had wisdom and old age strength!) For the lack of this great election many a career is but half-freighted with activities, a lazy ship, as it were, flying only half of its sails in an idle estuary, when it might have been a seven-masted boat, fully laden with great cargoes, every sail set, speeding between great ports at opposite ends of the ocean. . . . Most people prefer to drift, "to drift," and that so many of them are saved from drifting to disastrous shoals and reefs is a matter of thanksgiving to a merciful Providence. . . . It is due to personal indecision and failure to choose that so many never reach the high seas. Look forth then; go forth and seek; the Master Himself said, "Knock, and it shall be opened to you." There is an oracle in the heart of every man. Make it speak to you the message, and point out your best way in life. "Watch and pray."

It is not beyond the realm of probability that these simple words had fallen deep into the thoughts of Oliver Plunket, and also, on a day at Kenhurst, into the mind of Nora Gomez. In some small measure they stand as the "*Tolle, lege*" voice that made Augustine rise up a new man from a scriptural verse that he chanced upon. And with this much said, we might have done with our comment about Father Campion, and go on to look at him only as he comes into the final choice made by his young protégés. But another word touching upon his use of money will not be out of place here, especially since in his very thoughts now he is trying to solve a financial problem of high import to the present history.

First of all, Father Campion possessed no money of his own, not even a trifling copper; that poverty was of his very religious profession. But he had to use money; the scope of his work necessitated that, and the permission would be granted when necessity required it. He had, therefore, accustomed himself from the start to look on all the resources for help-

ing others as belonging not to him or his whims or his pet inclinations, but to the service of the poor and the Church. He was only a boy of fourteen when that great lesson came home to him.

It was a Christmas morning. And his hard-worked and zealous pastor, after the early Mass, called his little altar boys to him, and, with something of an apology for not having procured a present for them on that day, left within each hand a shining silver dollar, as he bade his little acolytes a merry and blessed Christmas.

Ned Campion when he came home held out the dollar on his little palm before his mother, saying that the priest had given one to each of the boys.

The mother clasped the hand and folded the little fingers over the coin, smiling with joy, as a mother will do, for any kindness shown to her child. "But, Neddie, darlin'," she said, drawing him to her side, "Neddie, dear, when you go back to the late Mass, drop the dollar into the poor-box at the back of the church,

unbeknownst to any one, young or old. Sure it's a priest's money, and that belongs to the Church and the poor, glory be to God. And we'll take and keep the blessing he gave you with all our hearts."

The memory of this incident went with Father Campion through life, reminding him to hold with sacred trust the gifts that came to him from his wealthy friends. Many a poor boy, who could not have entered a college door, if left to his dependence on home, had gone through Glendalough and had risen to noble service in the Church and State by the help of Father Campion. And yet he was not prone to favor indigence in a harmful way. He deprecated the spirit of "Yankee niggardliness" as he called it. He held that the boy himself should try to stand on his own feet, to put his shoulders hard against the wheel, and do something to earn his tuition. To do that would make for the boy's independence of mind and for thrift of character. So did he mark out some humble pathway where the young student might work upon some acre of en-

deavor for his own tilling, and bring home to himself that inward joy of spirit at the thought that he was not a free pensioner.

By these methods had he enabled many a non-paying student to feel independent in his school-days, to give as best he could, *quid pro quo*. Father Campion maintained that a blessing went with the education that cost the boy and his parents some sacrifice. He could not be accused of lack of generosity, when he allowed even a hard-working man to give precious money from his slim purse.

"I will get the boy a scholarship, John," he said to the man who came to see Father Campion one evening. And he explained what the scholarship meant.

"God knows I am not that badly off," answered the heroic father. "There's the wife and the little ones at home, but while I've got my breath, thanks be to God, I'll be decent and pay the boy's way, as much as I can."

And Father Campion let the man have his way, saying, "Very well, John, you may, if you feel that you can. There'll be a blessing

on the boy's career from his father's sacrifice."

The man repeated the words fourteen years later, when Father Campion stood by the altar assisting a young priest in his first Mass.

But we have said enough about two points in Father Campion's character to help us to appreciate the position that he now occupies, holding the door that is to open on the after-life of two young souls, Nora and Oliver, waiting for his advice. He is not the Oracle; he is only the ambassador of the King; and while his methods and his decisions may be fallible, he will not fail in honesty of intention, nor shall he be without the grace of God which goes with conscientious effort.

CHAPTER XVII

HERE AND THERE IN SEPTEMBER

DURING the month of August the little cottage in the Lincoln woods was the scene of many reunions. Diarmid's efforts to organize these simple festivities were quite successful; for while they bear no comparison to the brilliant celebrations that the summer world with fifty per cent. of endeavor can manoeuvre, yet these Lincoln parties, being in keeping with the temperament and aspiration of the host, were a source of real joy, events that would last with pleasant memories and find their echoes in the sociable evenings in town.

Father Campion very promptly sent to Nora the summer address of Clare Plunket; and on the very next mail from Lincoln a long letter flew away to Manchester. And on the following morning Oliver hastened out to Lincoln with an oral answer to the letter, bring-

ing from his mother and Clare more messages than could be crowded into a hundred letters. Then there was a reunion of dear friends the next day at Manchester; Diarmid came in the evening to fetch them home. And so the coming and going occupied many days of August. Other visitors there were, old school-mates or friends from town, but Kenneth Shankee was not of them.

"The Shankees must be out of town," thought Diarmid when he stopped to note the non-appearance of Kenneth. "Perhaps I'll find him in Concord."

Diarmid made an endeavor to meet him on Sunday, when he took his little group to church in Concord. He went around to the sacristy to make an inquiry of the pastor, feeling that so important a personage as Kenneth made himself to appear would be known at the church. But the kind old priest knew nothing about a person of that name. The marriage and the divorce had surely been kept secret behind the closed blinds where they had occurred.

Only once had Shankee attempted to find his way out to Lincoln. That was shortly after the day he was driven from his mother's house. His money accounts were on the short side of fifty cents. If that could take him out to Lincoln he might get enough there to tide him over his present gloomy outlook. "To dig I am not able, and to beg I am ashamed," was true in a directly opposite way of him. And if begging—or rather a condescending request for a loan—would prove ineffective, then he could exert his light fingers in some way or other before he left Lincoln.

Accordingly he dared to board the train, knowing that he had not money enough to take him half the way. He could look "big" when the conductor came.

But the conductor came sooner than Shankee wished for; moreover, as he stood waiting for the ticket, he had an eye that made Kenneth feel quite small.

"I say, what could have become of my tickets?" he muttered to himself, trying, however, to wear a look of nonchalance. "Confound it,

if I have left them at the club." And he looked at the conductor's pitiless stare. "I say, I must have left my book and tickets at the club." And he made another calm search of his coat pockets.

"I'll be back in a minute," the conductor nodded with managerial sang-froid, as he went forward to see why the train was stopping. The train, not more than a hundred yards from the station, came to a standstill. The switch ahead signaled that the drawbridge across the Charles was open.

Back came the conductor. "You can get off here," he said as Shankee, having neither ticket nor money to present, rose to make an explanation. "That's all right," the conductor waved away the attempted speech. "We are only a few feet from the station; another train will leave in twenty minutes—sufficient time for you to find your purse."

And Shankee stepped out and went back to the station and tried to think of some other destination than Lincoln. He knew that his mother's house was utterly barred to him; he

could look for no assistance from that quarter, not even the clothes which he might bundle out of his wardrobe and take to a pawnshop. And he did not know the whereabouts of the Plunkets; their house on Franklin Avenue, he saw from a respectable distance, frowned heavily at him with its drawn and silent shutters.

"And ten to one, but I'll pound his conceited uprighteous head for it," he said, and perhaps he fancied he could carry out his threat; "that conceited Oliver Plunket may have learned something about this Concord mess. His ears get too much news; they need a boxing. And his eyes don't mind their own business—they don't. But they will if I close them up for a while."

It was harmless chatter. The nearest object, as Shankee muttered these words, was a lamp-post, and that would never tell the fearful language to anybody.

So Kenneth found some place in a doorway near Atlantic Avenue to hide himself that night; but sleep did not come with alacrity.

And in the morning he was fortunate enough to hear, in the vicinity of the Market, that a laborer was needed on a truck garden in Hyde Park. He sidled over to the speaker, made inquiries, and before people were numerous on the streets he was riding on an old wagon out towards Hyde Park. Two weeks of work were ahead of him, and fifteen dollars, if he worked well.

While Kenneth was away from Boston the Plunkets returned from their Manchester cottage. The Lincoln people, too, came back to Massachusetts Avenue the same day. Clare was not in the house a half hour before the telephone rang for her.

"Who is it?" she asked with surprise. "How do people know so soon that we are home?" she had said to her mother as she walked towards the telephone.

"Gweny," came back the answer in a thin, childish treble.

"You, Gweny Shankee?" called Clare.

"The Shankees?" Mrs. Plunket asked with apparent gladness, "we have not seen them all

summer. Ask for all of them." She came near to Clare and whispered.

"And how are all at home, and you, Gwenny dear?" called Clare.

"I am well, thank you," answered the little voice; "but mother"—and her voice was lowered as she hesitated, "I must not let them hear me—mother is very ill—oh, so ill, Clare. And I have been calling for you every day. She sometimes asks for you, as if she wants you. Sometimes when her mind comes back to her, she speaks your name. And I thought I'd tell you."

It took some minutes for Clare and her mother to recover from the shock that the message gave them.

"I'll come down at once, Gwenny," said Clare. Then as she was preparing to go, she and her mother ran through a list of conjectures about Mrs. Shankee's illness, its probable causes, remote and proximate, and its present condition. But they fell wide of the mark in the guesses that they made.

Clare found the Shankee home in a state of

desolate gloom. Gwenny tried to smile as she turned her face up to Clare's kiss of greeting. Fridolin, with something of her frigid hauteur still about her, even in that atmosphere of desolation, made a little effort to smile, but the poor smile quickly departed, when it found no welcome about the lines of the mouth and eyes. And after a few minutes in conversation in the hallway, the three entered the room where the invalid mother was sitting propped up in an easy chair.

Clare was somewhat prepared by Fridolin's curt information; but when she stood there in the hushed room and looked pitifully about, the sight of the poor stricken mother was indeed appalling. Mrs. Shankee's eyes were open, but only a cold, unintelligent stare came from them as they looked fixedly across the room at an enlarged photograph of her husband, John Shanahy, in army clothes. Presently the mother's face began to draw up as if with grief; her head quivered, and in a few seconds the tears began to fall down her cheeks.

"There she is crying again," said Fridolin quite gently, and with as much feeling as her stoical heart would permit. "Now and then she cries, and we cannot tell why."

Gwendolyn went over to the invalid's chair, and put her arm about her mother's neck, and wiped away the tears, whispering all the while little words of endearment.

Fridolin beckoned Clare to the hallway. "Mother had a nervous breakdown early in August, and we could not get away from town," she said; but she kept secret all the story of the causes. "And then when we thought she was getting well, a very bad turn came, her mind became affected—Oh, dear mother." Fridolin at last gave way to the natural feelings of her heart and went down the hallway sobbing piteously.

Clare took the grieving girl in her arms and soothed her with a thousand consoling phrases out of a good heart. And seeing Fridolin quite calm again, she asked, "Have you had the priest?"

"Oh, no, Clare, I never thought of that,"

she answered and looked ashamed. "The priest never comes to our house, at least, he has not called here for many months."

"But you ought to tell him," said Clare, without any reproving tone or look. "You say that your mother becomes herself towards evening and can speak quite clearly. Have the priest come then. I'll go for him now if you wish, and so make sure that he will be here this evening."

And straightway she went off to the priest's house. Towards noon she telephoned to her mother that she would remain with the Shankees till evening. "Send Ollie down for me at eight o'clock," she added.

A desolate day it was, save for the fragments of time that gave Clare an opportunity to solace the two children. She found this occupation a very consoling one, especially with Gwendolyn. The cheerful, unaffected response of the child was better than sunshine in that air of clouds. Clare sent Fridolin out for a walk along the Charlesbank, while she and Gwenny strolled in the garden, and after-

wards went into the kitchen and helped the cook to get lunch ready.

Shortly before Fridolin returned, Clare with Gwenny at her side stepped, as they frequently did during the morning, to the door of the mother's room—to see that their patient was resting. Half-articulate words fell from the mother's lips.

"Clare Plunket," she said quite distinctly after a time.

Gwenny ran over to the chair and with a bright voice, her cheek against her mother's hair, she said, "She is here now, mamma, Clare is here now."

The cold, staring eyes turned from the photograph, where they had been fixed. The head twitched a little to the side. "She will not come to my house," said the mother in a staccato monotone.

"Why, yes, indeed, I will," answered Clare in a soothing voice; "here I am now. And mother will come, too." She leaned forward to press the motionless hands.

Slowly the blank staring eyes turned towards

the speaker, and then slowly closed, and a sad silence followed.

"I almost wish I had told the priest to come now," Clare whispered to herself. Gwendolyn gently stroked her mother's hands and then her forehead.

Slowly the eyes opened again and something like warmth and health appeared in them. She looked steadily at Clare. Then after a few minutes a smile came across the face, and the lips parted. "Why, Clare, I am glad to see you." She put up her hands and drew Clare's face down to her. "Gwen, dear, fetch me that little box—there," and she pointed to a parcel on the music table.

"Don't disturb yourself, Mrs. Shankee." Clare noticed a sign of pain come over the patient's face.

"But you must have missed it," said Mrs. Shankee in slow, measured speech, "it is your watch, Clare."

The little parcel was placed in Clare's hands. Then, as if this short moment of recognition were too great a strain on the shattered nerves,

the invalid's eyes closed again and Mrs. Shan-kee sank back into her dozing insensibility. A long sleep, or what appeared to be sleep, followed; and towards evening the sick woman awoke refreshed and apparently much improved. She was able to talk quite coherently and to listen to all that Clare had to speak about. There was no allusion to the watch on either part; Clare did not feel any curiosity about it, though, because it was her father's special gift to her, she was intensely grieved when she lost it. And the mother, with reasonable taciturnity, did not want to make the humiliating revelation, one of many that she now had stored up in her sad heart. She kept secret, even from her two daughters, the history connected with the watch—how, on that morning in August, following the disgraceful news from Concord, she bundled up her son's clothes, to send them after him forever; and going through the pockets she discovered several pawntickets, one of them for Clare Plunket's watch; and that afternoon, she, the broken-hearted mother, with her spirit crushed

by the awful issues in her son's career, had secretly crept away to the hateful district of the pawnshops, and redeemed the watch, and, with it, several articles of silver from her own house, her own name upon them.

The evening came, and with it the zealous priest from his West End church. While he was hearing Mrs. Shankee's confession, and during the colloquy which followed, the young people strolled up and down the garden. And by the time Oliver came to bring Clare home Mrs. Shankee had made rapid and vigorous advances towards her former good health. She was even able to walk about the room.

When Clare was ready to depart Mrs. Shankee called Oliver aside, "You are returning to Glendalough, Ollie?"

"Yes, Mrs. Shankee," he answered, "my last year, a critical year for me." And he shook a finger at Gwendolyn, as much as to say, "You must not distract me"—which made her laugh and take his arm.

"Blessings will be with you, Ollie," the

mother answered with a touch of sadness. "You will be true—true to what you have learned—Ollie." And shortly afterward as she bade good night to him, she added, quivering with pain that the words sent through her, "Have nothing to do with **Kenneth Shan-kee.**"

CHAPTER XVIII

A PROPOSAL

OLIVER PLUNKET did not make any great endeavor to solve the meaning of Mrs. Shankee's admonition. With a quick surmise or two that were kept within bounds from rash judgments, he fancied that Kenneth Shankee had probably in some thoughtless freak of conduct, displeased his mother, and afterwards, showing bad temper in the matter, had so irritated her that she felt impelled to warn others about her undutiful son. Such a surmise was wide of the mark. But Oliver was not a person to guess the real state of things, nor to think that the statement implied that a mother's heart had so lost faith in her son as to break with him even the slightest threads of affection. Nor did the return of the long-missing watch to Clare open up any curious conjecture. Both Clare and her brother had been disciplined in kindness of

thought and of speech from their earliest years.

"People can handle a scratch till it turns to an ugly sore," Colonel Plunket once said to his children, warning them against the evils of gossiping.

And old John Rogers, Nora's grandfather, gave, as his admonition to his own children, another droll metaphor, "A sneeze at one end of the town may be made to sound like a clap of thunder at the other."

So the Plunkets, when they came home that night, spoke the language of facts about the day at Shankee's. And the Gomez family came to know next to nothing about the condition of things in the sad and lonely house near Charles Street. That Mrs. Shankee was an invalid, but convalescing, and that Kenneth was not at home, perhaps traveling on one of his interesting tours—these few items constituted the budget of news concerning the wretched family.

Oliver, however, took Mrs. Shankee's words of admonition on their face value. He would be careful if he had to deal with Kenneth;

that, he said, would be mere prudence and common sense. And towards the first of October, when Shankee returned to Boston from his Hyde Park gardening, Oliver very gently but firmly refused his very polished request for the loan of a few dollars—"for a week or two, Plunket, till I get in a cargo I expect will surprise a few people."

"I could perhaps be in a better way, and accommodate you this evening, Kenneth, over at your mother's house," said Oliver without an effort at sarcasm; but he looked unflinchingly at the pompous face before him.

It was Saturday afternoon; Oliver according to his wont was home from Glendalough for the Sunday. "Clare and I are going over to your home this evening. Clare wants to have Gwenny come home with us for a week or so, while your mother is recuperating."

Shankee's eyes did not blink, nor did the muscles of his face alter by one millimeter their ridiculous attitude at this statement, though it was news indeed to him that his mother was unwell.

"Mother will not expect me to-night," he answered with his large drawl. "It's hard not to get over, but she knows that I am engaged elsewhere. Poor mother!" He was not afraid to utter the hypocrisy. His Concord master had told him that the secret of his misdeeds would not easily leak out. "Plunket will never find *that* out," thought Shankee. And he turned almost contemptuously and walked away. He would show that "cad of a Plunket" what he thought of him and his "pretty, little, goody ways."

Shankee quickly followed a suggestion that came to him from the recent information. His mother sick, was she? He would telephone—that was a way—he would telephone incognito and get some knowledge of conditions at home. He had once taken a butler's part in a play at school; he could impersonate the character again, and employ the disguising cockney speech. It would not be expensive to telephone—five cents—he could afford that much. It might be a lucrative expenditure.

And straightway he went to a telephone booth in a drugstore.

"This is Bleaky 'Ouse, Missus Bleaky as lives at 'Anover Havenue." Kenneth knew that his mother, with much rejoicing, had once succeeded in getting within doors at Bleaky House—a musicale at Shrovetide for which the subscription was rather a pretty sum of money. "And I am requested to ask about Mrs. Shan-kee's 'ealth."

"She is not quite well to-day," came the tiny voice, which Kenneth knew was Gwenny's.

"I wish to hexpress the 'earty sympathy of Mrs. Bleaky," said Kenneth, and paused to make up more. He was heartless, but he did not relish his nasty cajoling of little Gwenny.

"Thank you," she answered in her innocence, "I will tell mother."

Kenneth put the receiver back in its place and walked out to the street but not to remain on the curb for more than a minute. The street was too crowded for his ease of mind, callous even as it ought to be, and he slunk

away to an alley that ran parallel with Columbus Avenue.

As he walked along another suggestion flashed across his thoughts, and he caught at it. He would walk out to the Gomez home. He would see what chance he had there. It was rather a long walk, a tiring twenty minutes, but he could not throw pennies away. He had a few dollars left from his earnings in Hyde Park; but these he must hold fast, and invest them with elaborate caution. He was not done with Boston yet; "There was a kick or two left in him," as he said grimly, and he would kick hard till he had to go, a determination that is difficult to understand, since it would be easier for him, either for better or for worse, to pull up his stakes and move away to other horizons. But then there are similar cases in countless regions of conduct, and they fall outside explanation. An opium fiend, for instance, will have his tonic in a subterranean cavern where you could not pay a sane man to live. And you may tell the Esquimaux of sunny lands and an easy livelihood to the south,

but they will keep to their barren and desolate ice-plains to which they have become naturalized. Kenneth Shankee, like a piece of drift-wood afloat in a harbor, would flounder about in the wash of various currents, and flop against different banks. Or, like the whale that once got into Boston harbor and caused consternation both in fact and in imagination, he could and would run about with his sputterings and threats of havoc till chased off to the high seas.

Here now he was at Massachusetts Avenue, and he knew the street number that he wanted. Nora Gomez, as he rang the bell, was at the door.

"Just passing, Miss Gomez," he said as he stepped in, "and I thought I would pay a long-deferred call. I owe your brother a thousand apologies, and," he tried to approach an attitude of gallantry, "some of them for you."

"Why not at all, Kenneth," she answered with her usual naïveté. And Shankee noted that she called him by his first name. "I am sure that Diarmid understood you were away

—on some great tour of travel, was it not? And so he realized that you could not come out to see us.”

“Quite so, Nora,” he answered with a grim kind of suavity, and feeling emboldened to use her first name. “And I am glad to be back again. Poor mother is not feeling well.” Had he succeeded in bringing tears to his eyes they would have been a special sample of the crocodile’s.

He did not pursue this last topic to any great length, even though Nora seemed anxious to have full details about his mother’s illness, and news of his sisters. He was able to make it appear that his dignity did not consider the parading of family sorrows the proper thing. And his mind, which could be alert on some subjects, was planning a bold manoeuvre. He had a very simple-hearted person before him; she had the innocence of the dove, not the cunning of the serpent. That was his with a large monopoly.

“Yes, mother is much better, to-day,” was his parting salute to that topic. “And I felt

I ought not to leave Diarmid's invitation unacknowledged any longer."

Nora heard the children coming in from their play in the park. She opened the door and led them into the parlor. "These are two you have not met before, Kenneth. This is Margaret, and here is Aileen." And she put their tiny warm hands out to Shankee's. "This is Kenneth Shankee, Margie. His dear father used to know papa and mamma so well, and Oliver's father, too."

"Oh," little Margaret looked up with her glad eyes, "you tell stories, don't you?"

"And can you tell good ones like Oliver Plunket's?" broke in Aileen, waving back her long black hair.

"There now," answered Nora. (Shankee was not quick enough to comprehend the situation to give a cunning response.) "Put away the playthings and then come back," and she motioned the children to the hallway.

Shankee, as soon as the children withdrew, determined to press on with his plan. His

eagerness, very fortunately, made him lose a craftiness that might otherwise have guided him. "I came to see if I might take you to the theatre this evening. The Belvidere opens to-night."

Now the Belvidere was a theatre in excellent repute, and the opening play was a healthy one; the offense in Shankee's invitation did not arise from either of these points. Yet he was quick enough to notice the startled look that came over Nora's face; and he cut his words short, not even adding an apology for what he now recognized was not only unwelcome but painful as well.

Nora's silence, for she seemed dazed at Shankee's words, added to the embarrassment. She hung her head as one slight sign of her thorough confusion of mind. The utter impropriety of the invitation smote her feelings quite as if the hydrant out beyond the window had broken its cap and shot a six-inch volley of cold water into the room. The vulgarity of it—though she did not quite accuse Kenneth Shankee of being low-bred and vulgar—

shocked her and left her incapable of replying even in a stammering manner.

True, Oliver Plunket would come on occasional Saturday afternoons to take her and Margie and Aileen to the matinee. "Come, hurry up, Margie and Aileen," he would call, as he reached the door, "we're going down to the Belvidere, and we'll let Nora come this time." And his merry laugh and the waving of his hands, urging greater haste, followed them as they ran off for their hats.

Poor Nora! In her dear circle of friends, and in all her associations, she had never experienced anything that seemed so improper to her as Shankee's invitation. And she could not help betraying her perturbation. Yet she did not rebuke him as if it were an insult he had grossly spoken. She had a mind too well disciplined for that, howsoever her feelings may have chafed under the hurt. Moreover, she quickly thought, Kenneth may have intended nothing but a brusque sort of kindness; his may have been the behavior of the world as he knew it.

At the end of a painful silence that each moment redoubled, Shankee found his voice, and in a stammering way tried to make amends for the blunder which he at last perceived. "I could not get in to see Diarmid as I started out. But—but," and he wondered where the money was to come from, if this other part of the invitation should be accepted, "I mean to have him come, too, and Mrs. Gomez also."

"It is very thoughtful of you," Nora said at this, as she could truly say, though Shankee's thoughtfulness was not his fault, "but I expect Oliver Plunket, who comes to take us out afternoons when he has nothing better to do, afternoons when his mother and Clare are not at home—and they are away to-day."

The two young sisters returned to the room, and that put an end to the talk about the theatre, and even any possible deliberation about it. The children seemed alert for one of the stories of adventure, such as they had been led to expect. Politeness held in their eagerness; and their silence only helped to increase the awkwardness of the visitor.

Shankee could not very well abide the searching eyes of the children, though they were full of glancing innocence. He felt that they could fathom him even to the far extent of making him very uncomfortable. How he might otherwise have managed to wriggle out of the uncompromising situation cannot be conjectured; for these children's eyes, harmless as the simple inquiring glances were, made him wince as if they were stinging whips; and in a very short time they all unconsciously drove him out of the house.

His exit was accompanied by many incoherent excuses for his sudden departure. He floundered through a dozen phrases, as irrelevant as a confused mind could make them; and then recovering breath, and trying to put a flicker of pleasantness into a sorry smile he said, "I'll go before Plunket comes, three is a crowd, don't you know." It was a silly effort to say something smart. "I envy Plunket his afternoon."

And Nora stood wondering at the meaning of these unintelligible words. Yet she did not

indulge in exuberant comment about the visitor when Molly and Diarmid returned. "Just guess who was here this afternoon?" she said, making the answer wait till they had guessed. "Kenneth Shankee, yes, yes, yes," she added as they waved out a refusal to believe her. "And he wants to take the three of us, you, Molly, and me to the Belvidere." And Nora straightway changed the subject of the talk.

But Diarmid later in the evening brought back the topic, "We must not forget the theatre party, Nora. I'll probably run across Kenneth down town Monday, or you may see him at church to-morrow. I've called for him at home but I cannot find him there. Let us say—Wednesday evening?" And he looked up inquiringly. "Wednesday evening it is; we'll make up a little party. I may get Clare Plunket and Shane Desmond to sit with us."

"And Ollie," cried the children, though they knew they were not to be in any night party.

"Ollie will be at Glendalough," answered Nora, "and cannot come in."

CHAPTER XIX

A THEATRE PARTY

KENNETH SHANKEE had no eyes for the past; he never tried to benefit by the discipline of experience, whether that had to do with success or failure. Unrestraint was the atmosphere he had breathed at school and at home. Like several agents in nature he took the line of least resistance; he found it easier to march straight on, the way the conceited tilt of his nose indicated, rather than to retrace his steps or his thought and study any paths that had been disastrous to him.

Yet, as he walked along, returning to the centre of the city by the obscure alley, he did, for at least a few minutes, cast a few fragmentary glances at a shadow of his recent past; but he did this merely to get away from it and to come the quicker into the sunshine ahead—the sickly sunshine that it ought to be for him.

With the audacity that had grown strong from his long years of unrestraint, he was presumptuous enough to imagine that Nora Gomez was part of his future. And just there the shadow appeared; "You are married already."

"Pooh!" Shankee said almost aloud, as if he had heard a real voice, and wished to refute it with scorn. "I am not married—was never married. It was no marriage." His adversary, if he were of flesh and blood, might have heard the vehement whisper.

Shankee knew what he was saying. For it was true that he was not a married man in the eyes of the Church or the State. And he put the truth straight to the insinuating voice: "First of all, it was no real marriage; no consent there; and it was not before a priest. And secondly, as far as the State is concerned, the cursed contract was annulled—though there was nothing to annul."

Upon that argument he felt better, and he came out into his dull, uninigorating sunshine. So he could entertain hope—that is—

and he had to pause at the suggestion. With audacity in large doses he could entertain this hope, that it was not an impossibility to marry, yes, even so good a Catholic as Nora Gomez. His past was covered up well, sunk deep in silent hearts. For instance, his mother was not going to disgrace herself by revealing what she knew. Of course, he would have to exert himself; he must put on appearances that should be dazzling. But he had trained well for such a part in his program. And then Diarmid was so gullible.

“But confound that pest of a Plunket. He gets in there with his pretty ways.” And Shankee tried to knit his eyebrows. “He thinks I’ll bother him again for money, does he? I’ll bother him some other way, the little pet! I’ll—” he did not finish that threat, though in his puny wrath he felt himself clinch his right fist. Perhaps, on second thought, if he was really doing any thinking, he more prudently made the reflection that after all it could not be so easy to pound Plunket’s head. Oliver might have a reply in kind

and stiffer in degree—one that would be emphatic enough for Shankee.

Feeling big with the imaginings that accompanied him to the city, he very easily turned his steps towards one of the club-houses that he used to know in his more prosperous days. A twinge or two of anxiety ran along his nerves; but he could not hesitate to make the experiment. Success there, his reinstatement in the fellowship of a year ago, would be a feather worth wearing when he met Diarmid Gomez again, or “that righteous Plunket.” Four dollars was not a big purse to take to the club on a Saturday evening; but small as it was, he had a way to make it sound like ten times that amount. And he could wear a look that bespoke a thousand or two in ready cash.

A clerk came down from the desk, shortly after Kenneth entered the smoking-room, and said, with a perfunctory tone, yet sharply, “I say, Shankee, it’s a bit of nasty business; but I must tell you. I have orders not to let you into these rooms. I’ll show you the written statement, if you come over to the desk.”

But Kenneth did not move, and the lofty look of scorn that he flung at the official was not in the least terrorizing to the latter's studied frigidity. "While you were away," the man went on, "some of the members had a heap of talk about you, and they gave me my orders. And there's a letter from the Brans-ton Club—something about missing silver, as I heard them say. You can answer their suspicions, if you wish." He turned on his heel and went back to the desk.

Shankee stood dazed for fully a minute. Then, as if the clerk had done no more than condescendingly brushed his clothes, he moved towards a writing-table.

The clerk took notice, and called out, as he came forward with the letter to which he alluded, "You are not to use any of our paper and envelopes, Shankee."

Some half-stifled phrase sputtered out of his lips as he slunk out-of-doors to the street. He ran his eyes down the contents of the letter; Branston Club, in a very curt message, forbade him to appear in its rooms or on its golf

links. Signed—by one of his former classmates.

Yet Shankee went right on. He did not pause for reflection. His motto was "Go ahead." Keep moving on; even a retreat is a forward movement. But do not stop to reconnoitre.

And he came to his mother's house, where he should not have gone in all his perverse audacity, if he had stopped one moment for reflection.

He slipped into the garden noiselessly by the side gate, and came unobserved to the kitchen door. He was not afraid of meeting his mother; she was up in her sick chamber. And his sister would not disturb her by crying out against him.

"O, Kenneth!" said a little voice. It was Gwenny's, and she whispered to him and put out her hands to him, and kissed him, as he stood at the door.

"O, Kenneth!" she said again, still whispering as if to match the deep silence; "mother is a little better to-day." And then looking up

with her pleading, innocent eyes, "But you must not stay, Kenneth. I know that would hurt her." Tears came to her eyes. "It's too bad, Kenneth; but you must stay away till mother is better. Then I'll coax her to let you come back."

"All right, Gwenny dear," he answered, as her little arm came over his shoulder, "I'll do as Gwenny says." And then, with some embarrassment, which was something unusual for him to show in his own home, he said, "My purse is rather low. But, that's nothing," he pretended to bear his low fortune bravely, "I can get along somehow."

"But I can let you have three dollars, Ken. I have only that much in my desk out here in the library." She ran off to get it. "I wish it were more, Ken, but it would not do to ask mother just now." And again she put her arm about him, but not for the purpose of holding him back.

"Come, Ken," she said with the air of a little woman, "you must be going. I don't want Fridolin to see you. Mother might know

then. And you don't want mother to worry again. Sometimes she cries, Ken, and says it was all a dreadful mistake, whatever she means; and Fridolin blames your school. There, Ken," and she pulled his head down to her lips, "do take care of yourself, and mother will get better, and then you will come back—then you will come home, dear Ken."

For a few moments Kenneth Shankee allowed his crass conscience to be touched by the tender words of his loving sister. He stood at the door, and looked intently, even affectionately at her. It was a moment when, if he had a less impervious heart, he might have said, "I will arise."

Yet he did not go away without some feelings worthy of the moment; across his thoughts, much as they avoided retrospection, flashed the incident of the visit to the Gomez home that afternoon, and he said with a very natural slowness and seriousness, "Some day I may have good news, and I will let little Gwenny know."

And he was true to his word though the mes-

sage did not come as soon as the little trustful sister expected.

When night drew on and he had filled out an hour of it over his dinner in a not too expensive hotel, he went directly to bed. The tramping up and down all the day had completely tired him. Moreover, his early leave of the world that night was actuated by no other motive than to go sparingly with the money he now possessed. He needed every penny of his purse for the prospect, howsoever dim it was, that he built up for himself to-day.

On the following morning he did not waste any of the money over a delicate breakfast. A roll and a cup of coffee was a satisfying meal, at least to one of his financial status. And a walk in the morning air was an inexpensive thing. And what more economical direction could he take than that towards the South End. There was a point, a rendezvous—the church—where he might come upon some people who were in his thoughts. And, though he waited in the church the greater part of the morning, he did at length obtain

the reward he wanted. He managed with averted eyes to reach the heavy iron gateway just as Diarmid Gomez came out with Margaret and Aileen. "Nora told me of your call," Diarmid said, after the salutations. "I was sorry to hear of your mother's illness."

"Quite well now, Gomez," Shankee answered with his bold nerve. "In fact, almost recovered."

Feeling that Kenneth would be anxious to go directly home, Diarmid did not protract the conversation. "I was going down to see you, or at least to telephone. I wanted to have you come to the theatre with us to-morrow evening, that is, if you care to go, now that your mother is better. I would like to have Nora go out a little more," he said with his naïveté. "I may be able to have Clare Plunket accompany us, and Oliver, too, since it's a holiday at Glendalough—he telephoned last night."

"I'll try to make one of the party," Shankee replied, hiding any show of enthusiasm. "I may be preoccupied, but——"

"Don't put yourself out for us," Diarmid

broke in. "And to make it easier for you, let us have you join us at the Marquette for dinner at six."

"Very well," came the unemotional acceptance, though Shankee, in his secret heart, wished the invitation also included dinner and a few hours in the Gomez home this very day.

But he waited patiently for Monday evening, supporting the interim with meagre morsels of food. He entered his home furtively on Monday morning, and by little Gwenny's help he procured a large bundle of his clothes which he took away and deposited in a cheap lodging-house. That evening at six he watched eagerly for his friends to enter the Marquette, and with a deliberate air of one preoccupied with deep considerations, yet a calm demeanor withal, he went in after them.

Nora and Molly looked up with surprise, as they saw Kenneth come down from the lobby towards them. Diarmid had not told them they were to have another member in the party. And during the meal Kenneth, as was to be expected, furnished them with an almost un-

broken narrative about some wonderful experiences that, he said, he had gone through—first, the winter of thrilling adventure in the woods of Maine; then, the social doings at this and that club; and finally the dozen or more schemes he had in the business world, puzzling him to know how to decide—all told as if he had written it in a book and were reading it off for the tenth time.

The theatre did not interest him; the play they chose to see for Nora's sake was such a banality. "The Merchant of Venice," the old bit of antiquated lumber. Shivers! what a bore. Ugh! Shankee did not know how he could last it out. And then Nora was not talkative, and who wanted to talk with Diarmid?

At the end of the second act he was able to hope for some relief for his disgusted feelings. Diarmid leaned forward and whispered that Molly wanted to go home; an oppressive headache had come on her.

Nora rose to go; though all along her countenance gave evidence of the deep interest she was having in the play.

"You should not come," said Diarmid, taking her gently by the wrist. "I know you like the piece. Stay." And as she shook her head to signify her disinclination, he added, "I shall very likely return in time to take you home." And he rose and went off with Molly before Nora could show further protest.

Diarmid and Molly as they came to the subway entrance on Tremont Street met Clare Plunket and Oliver.

"Clare was at Mrs. Shankee's, and I had to come over for her. That is why I did not meet you for the theatre," Oliver said quickly, upon the exchange of greetings.

"Molly is not well," Diarmid was telling Oliver, while the two women were chatting together. "And I left Nora at the theater with Kenneth Shankee."

"What?" Oliver's question was emphasized enough to make a group of bystanders swing around and look with surprise; Molly and Clare left a sentence half-finished and drew close to their brothers.

"Here, Clare," Oliver said, but now in a

whisper, though imperative, "will you be so good as to accompany Molly and Diarmid, and wait at their home for me?" And he turned sharply off towards the theatre.

Diarmid stepped briskly after him, saying, "Ollie, here are the tickets."

"All right," was the curt reply, and Ollie pushed on and made his way over the crowded crossing.

He did not go directly to the seat by Nora's side. He waited till the curtain went down; then in the commotion ensuing on the lights and the applause and the interlude by the orchestra, he went down the aisle, and with a studied expression of imperturbability sat down. For the sake of concealing his mind from Nora, he bowed quite pleasantly to Shankee, and then whispered to Nora, "Clare has gone back with Molly and Diarmid." Nora's eyes lit up joyfully at this but she did not have a chance to speak.

"We were getting at the key to the play," Shankee broke in, with as large a manner as he could give to his speech. "Miss Gomez

does not agree with me that the piece is intended to show that the Jews are splendid haters—diabolic even.”

“Why, Oliver, it seems to me,” Nora spoke up with her sweet simplicity, “Shakespeare meant to portray a high degree of true and noble friendship, one that would count no cost to help a worthy friend.”

Oliver, his mind not yet alert for this controversy, for his feelings were not by any means settled in a proper repose for literary discussion, did not reply immediately.

“Plunket, you ought to know,” said Shankee with a tone that could not conceal its unwelcome condescension. “Glendalough has a name for analyzing things.”

“Well, yes,” Oliver began slowly, but having Nora in his mind for his reply rather than Shankee. “It is quite up-to-date now to say that the spirit of this play is Jew-hate. The desire to satirize the Jew, to heap scorn and ridicule upon him was the vogue, and very strongly so about the Shakespearian time. But I doubt that Shakespeare made *that* the

motive of 'The Merchant of Venice.' You will probably see the great purpose of the piece towards the end. It seems to me simply this: Antonio was a true friend, a large-hearted nobleman. And to assist one whom he held in friendship, he would stop to make no calculations. Even a pound of flesh, and the persistent hatred of a despised money-lender could not deter him. The Jew, therefore, and all the terrible horrors are merely a background to bring out more fully the white light of a noble friendship and of a heroic sacrifice."

Such, indeed, was the lesson of the play, as Nora thought, when the curtain seemed ready to fall at the end (and we shall see how it came home to her later, though in an entirely different setting). Antonio stood there almost alone on the stage. Through his magnanimity, through his sacrifice and imminent peril he had brought lifelong joy to others.

In silence the three went from the theatre. Oliver's thoughts were busy though his lips were silent—how to get Nora through the crowd without having any one recognize

Shankee. Oliver did not know what the world's judgment was concerning Shankee; but since Kenneth's mother had warned him to have nothing to do with her son, it was sufficient for him to decide that Nora should not be seen in the company of such a man.

He quickly hailed a taxicab, so as to avoid the publicity of a brilliantly-lighted street car. And without encouraging a conversation, much to the surprise of Nora, who thought the two men would have a number of things to talk about, Oliver managed to make the fifteen minutes pass with no more talk than a few commonplace remarks. With a perfunctory manner he assisted Nora out of the cab before her door on Massachusetts Avenue, eliminating even the formal handshaking with her, as she said "Good Night" and moved away; for he would not have Shankee's hand touch hers.

"Do you want to take this cab back to town?" Oliver said, turning and speaking with an unwonted sharpness.

"Too fine a night," came the unruffled answer. "I will enjoy the walk." Oliver

stepped forward and paid the chauffeur.

"You are a capable usher, Plunket," said Shankee meaning to be sarcastic, as he started away.

Oliver stepped up to him. Yet not because of the insignificant words did he allow his indignant feelings to flash out: "Yes, I can play that part, when necessity requires it;" he grasped Shankee's arm and swung him around to look him full in the face. "And I want to tell you something in a very few words."

There was no mistaking that Oliver Plunket was aroused by some very strong feeling: and Shankee, though he tried to conceal his surmises under a stolid grimace, allowed himself to listen.

"I want to say I know something about you, something that is a burning pain to know. Don't pretend so," Oliver's eyes flared at the haughty sneer that Shankee flung at him. "I add just one word more. I say that you are to keep away from here," and he pointed towards the Gomez door. "Don't you ever dare to set foot here again. I have not told

Diarmid yet, but I may feel obliged to do so, though out of respect for your dead father, who was my father's friend, I do not relish publishing you." He turned towards the steps to go in for his sister Clare.

Shankee for a moment made an attempt to summon up a feeling of courage and go after Plunket and his cutting words. But there was no stock of that virtue in the furthest reaches of his soul; he never cultivated what little vestige of it was there by right of nature. "Huh!" he said with a sneer, and drifted away into the night.

CHAPTER XX

AN OFFERING

A VERY slight knock at the door of any one of our senses may be sufficient to open the chamber of the mind to a crowded assembly of thoughts that come and go without any fixed order, waiting not shyly for an introduction to one another, and departing as unceremoniously as they entered, leaving no farewell message for the pleasure of memory or for resolutions to support the future. Thus the fall of a leaf may remind you of some line in a poem, and the poem bring upon the scene of the imagination the teacher who first read the line to you; then come days at school, the road down to the village, a brass band playing far away, then the picture of a great battle, monuments now on the hillside, a river running past, and now you are beyond the hills, farther and farther, till, lo! a new sensation occurs, and your dream of five minutes van-

ished and you come back from the antipodes.

It was not however by leaps and bounds beyond all fixity of consecutive thought that Nora Gomez arrived at a certain state of mind the day after the play at the theatre. For weeks past, indeed ever since the day when she went to Glendalough—that very day when Oliver Plunket had gone upon a somewhat similar quest—Nora had often entertained, though in a brief manner, the thought that was now a frequent guest in her mind.

She had heard from Father Campion that afternoon at Glendalough, you will remember, of a young man who aspired to the religious life, who had all the requirements except the strong conscious desire, and for want of that he might not attain the goal. Nora, as we have said, did not know that this person was Oliver Plunket. But whoever that aspiring young man was, the case itself was sufficient to touch her interest and arouse her sympathy. There was a kinship to her in that history; the vision of a promised land to both of them, but only half promised—a land which they were

not to enter if present indications were the prophet.

Little by little, therefore, the thought grew with Nora and took fuller possession of her mind, that she might be able to assist the young unknown aspirant, unknown to her but surely known to God. She might sacrifice the precious element of a vocation which she so strongly owned—the ardent desire so like a bright light to her life the past four years—she could give up that in favor of one who needed it, who had all else but this to fulfil his surety of a vocation.

The first time that this thought presented itself to her—one evening shortly after the visit to Glendalough—she did not trouble to weigh it, nor to give it more than a mere passing notice. She had rooted her great desire for the religious life so deeply in her heart, it had grown and twined itself about her affections so thoroughly, that any hint of ever losing it had to die a sudden death. But by degrees the suggestion returned with ever-increasing vigor, and at each reappearance it was accorded a

more attentive audience. Yet its visitations were not entirely without pain. How could they be? How could Nora look at the proposition, generous though her heart was, and be unmoved at the prospect of the dread loss it meant to her? What loss could she compare to that? Friends or fortune? They were dear to her, and with the measure of devotion that they deserved would she spend herself for them. But this longing of her heart, this breath of her soul, it was a very part of herself; it was her anchor in eternity.

There came, then, the conflict of two opposing inclinations, one whispering to her to make a sacrifice for the young person of whom she had heard; the other tightening her hold upon the inward guest of her young soul, the patient hope that she had cherished so joyfully. And by degrees, as the generous sympathy for the young aspirant to the priesthood increased, she would linger over considerations that appealed to her for him.

"If he obtained his desire he would be a priest!" she was saying meditatively, "a priest

of God, think of that! And whatever else he did that would make for his eternal life and the salvation of others by his preaching, his zeal, dispensing the Sacraments, this alone were enough to make his case win my poor little sacrifice—that he could stand every morning at the altar. The holy Sacrifice of the Mass!” And after a short pause, she said, “There is the greater glory to God. What could I do to equal that? Even the angels cannot offer that great act of the altar, that adorable act of Sacrifice.”

But then as the heart got ready to present the treasure of its offering, a feeling of dread took hold of her and swept her off to opposite considerations.

“It is not merely the loss of a convent life,” she would say with that inner voice, “it is not the absence of solitude and of prayerful times, and the blessed hours working for others, that I hesitate to offer. It is not the fear of the world I have; but of a consequence that might come.” And being alone in her room she hid her face in her hands, and bent over her prie-

dieu. "What if I should change—having no longer the graces that came with my hopes and my desires. What if I should come to love the world?" Nora knew the meaning of her own query, as it came up from her fear. She held true what was said of old—that there is a friendship for the world which is enmity to Christ.

And this is sufficient to acquaint us in a brief way with the present text of Nora's thoughts. It certainly must, to a great part of the world, seem an unimportant theme of mental deliberation, one that is altogether out of measure with the anxiety and pain it caused. But the fact remains, however people may look amiss at it, that an unerring Voice did say that there is a "pearl beyond all price" and that he is wise who tries to possess it. And Nora may elicit something of praise for her anxiety to keep the pearl that she had found, and for that pain of soul which came to her when she disposed of the treasure. Her character, made strong by native endowments, and vivified by a faith in that great life which is not measured by the horizons of time and space, would make

the sacrifice with courage, and afterward support her loss with joyful resignation. We can, therefore, with the respect of silence if not admiration, let pass her hours of anxious deliberation and their consequent sense of loss. Greater heartaches have been inflicted even by the world's mailed hand over the loss of a paltry temporal ambition.

It needed no keen perception on the part of Diarmid to discover that his sister was not passing through a period of unalloyed consolations. Now and then, especially when the family group assembled in common duties and recreations, Nora was active and light-hearted enough. A spirit of joy pervaded the house when friends came to join the little circle: Oliver Plunket, when his school hours permitted, and he could play "Indian" with Margaret and Aileen; and Shane Desmond, who often accompanied Clare Plunket, and who would tell to the children his many narratives of fairy-land and all that was "once upon a time."

And Father Campion, too, in his distant

court at Glendalough, where he was pleading before his King the thousand needs of his ambassadorship, found it easy to detect between the lines of Nora's letters a slight hint of some struggle that was going on, of feelings, that, while they breathed of sacrifice and yet of hope, had nevertheless a sure touch of dejection.

"I am sending you a picture of a very wonderful flower," he wrote to her after one of these letters. "It is the edelweiss, Nora, and it grows near the top of the Alps, far up amid the snow and ice. And the Alps are far away, but we can make the edelweiss grow in our own hearts, even amid sorrow and fatigue—the edelweiss of patience and joyful resignation. And remember, Nora, that just beyond the Alps lies Italy, the land of sunshine and of perennial flowers."

Father Campion had not yet heard anything of this new consideration that was uppermost in Nora's mind just now; though she would unhesitatingly have told him of it had she found him at home when she called towards the end of October. He had departed that very

morning to begin a series of retreats in academies, here and there in New England, and even in the States farther south. And very probably he would have exerted all his cautiousness before he would attempt to approve of the action that Nora wanted to perform in favor of the unknown aspirant to the priesthood. He might be impressed by the noble intention and its trustful simplicity. But could he see in advance what the issue would be? He could not with certainty predict that the offering would be accepted, that the gift would be transferred to Oliver. And even if such a result did follow from Nora's sacrifice, how would she, he might have asked himself, fare in her new condition; what new temperament towards the world might develop within her? While she must continue, like any Christian, to hold fast to that "narrow way," her feelings and her dispositions towards the things of the world might gradually change, having no longer the ideal set before them that heretofore inspired her life since the days at school.

But Father Campion did not have to meet

these possible questions. Nora made the renouncement without waiting for the approbation or refusal of her spiritual guide.

The crisis in this long, mental struggle came to her a few days after the play of "The Merchant of Venice." The noble conduct of Antonio had not the force of an inspiration; it was far from being a precise parity to the act she had in mind. But it may have disposed her natural admiration for a generous deed; and being in that state, an unseen grace, illuminating her mind and invigorating her will, lifted her thoughts into the realm of the supernatural, and made her act of sacrifice something that mere natural nobility could never achieve.

It was a day of trial for her. Men have said, against deserting a post of honor or of duty, "May my right arm wither away, may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I forget my troth." And Nora was going to abandon a path where she walked so devotedly through golden years.

All that afternoon she was alone in the house, Margaret and Aileen being with the Plunkets

after their school let out. And by the night-time Nora had her heart in readiness for the sacrifice. She did not delay over emotion or, as if with her hand on the plow, look back with renewed indecision. One predominating reason stood before her mind—the office and the opportunities of a priest were greater in the service of God. What a rich reward would come of her offering, if she could, by her petition, have her part of a vocation transferred to the young man! People have given chalices to the service of the altar, have out of their poverty built churches and adorned them. This would be Nora's contribution, to assist in the building of a vocation in God's special service, in a life consecrated to His work, and forever—"Thou art a priest forever."

It was a Saturday evening. Clare Plunket after returning from a drive with the children stayed for tea with Nora. Oliver came with Shane Desmond later in the evening; and after the hours of enjoyment in music and chatting, singing over and over the old household songs, the little party broke up.

Oliver was holding the hands of Margaret and Aileen, as he went toward the door; and leaning over to them as he bade good night, he whispered, "And say a little prayer for me to-night, Margie and Aileen, and be sure that Nora also says one for me. I need a very special prayer, and you must help me." And he waved a farewell as he dropped their hands, and whispered affectionately, "Good night."

They did not forget his request; their sweet innocent voices made his petition known before the throne of God. And Nora took part in that same prayer; though she did not know that it was Oliver Plunket for whom she was interceding in the offering that she was making of her vocation, when, at the conclusion of her night prayers, she said, "And, dear Lord, Thou knowest the thoughts of my heart, all that have been so close with me these past days. Thou dost know the desire that I have had; from Thy goodness it came to me. And Thou knowest the young man of whom Father Campion told me. Take, dear Lord, then, if it please Thy will to do so, take the desire Thou didst give to

me, and fill his heart with the strong will to be Thy priest, Thy priest forever."

Nora leaned over her prie-dieu covering her face with her hands, remaining silent there for several minutes before she retired to rest.

CHAPTER XXI

A SOLDIER'S SON

THE autumn athletic games at Glendalough contributed to the entertainment of several whose names we are familiar with. Football, especially on a Saturday afternoon, was sure to bring to a favorite corner of the grandstand a group that passed in at the gate under the guidance of Diarmid Gomez or Shane Desmond. The "right end" of the Glendalough football team was Oliver Plunket. The requirements of the position precluded the possibility of his being at any time with his circle of spectators.

"Why don't they kick the ball up this way? Ollie would run up, and we'd give it to him," said little Gwenny Shankee, much to the merriment of the benches near by. She had come out with Clare Plunket, being a week-end guest at Clare's house.

Oliver always joined the party on the home-

ward journey; for Diarmid and Shane would spend an hour about their familiar haunts in the college, calling on teachers whom they knew, and taking the girls through lecture rooms and halls, full of interest, either by reason of the paraphernalia they contained or the stories that were associated with them.

The third Saturday of November deprived Oliver of his delightful aftermath to the game, and even from riding home with his expectant friends. At the "kick off" in the second period of the game Oliver made a splendid catch of the ball as it came like a low-driven shot. The impact, as he lunged forward for the ball with his uplifted hands, threw him to the ground, and when he nimbly arose and started down the field in advance of any "interference" that could get to him, one of the other team jumped before him. Oliver stopped short and attempted to swing away to the left. The powerful "tackle" swung round, too, and came down full force on Oliver's right leg, flinging him to the ground, thus wrenching and fracturing his ankle.

"Pull it back into position," he said, quite cheerfully, as the men gathered at his side. Then when the pain eased, he stood up and arranged with the Captain about his successor in the game. He waved to his sister Clare. And on the arms of two of the substitutes he left the field. No serious injury was done. Oliver reached the infirmary and learned that it would be three weeks before he could walk about again.

"My last football game at Glendalough," he said, with a smile, to that announcement; putting his hand on the Brother who was bandaging the ankle, he playfully added, "You will have me ready for the baseball season, won't you, Brother?"

He had to remain a week in the infirmary. Then being able to get about with crutches, he was allowed to go home for Thanksgiving Day and the week that followed.

The days within doors were not devoid of a kind of pleasure that Oliver knew how to enjoy. Though always of a home-loving disposition, and among his other traits accustomed

to recount the various happenings of his school life to his mother and sister, telling them of his plans and purposes at least by indirect allusions and phrases that half-revealed his mind, he had never made known to them, beyond occasional hints at the topic, his present position on the matter of his vocation.

What he was to turn his life to after leaving Glendalough had never been a very serious problem to any of the household. Mrs. Plunket knew that other years of study in some professional school would follow the course at the college, if Oliver was going to law or medicine. In business he could start well, having among the family friends many who would introduce him to a prominent position. And in journalism there were still in the editorial and managerial rooms of the newspapers those who would let the memory of Colonel Plunket recommend his son. Oliver's father had during twenty years after the Civil War acted as a sub-editor on a Boston journal. Occasionally, too, some remark about West Point and a career in the Army very

easily entered into the family conversation. But these possibilities were subjects for mere transitory talk, and for thoughts as transitory with regard to Oliver's future.

His home confinement, however, during his nursing of the injured ankle, induced an atmosphere for the contemplation of that question. The long, unoccupied hours, without the distractions of physical activity, gave them ample time for thought and talk upon the subject.

Oliver, during this delightful sojourn at home, found a chance to look more attentively over papers that belonged to his father, either in connection with his military life or with his work afterwards in journalism. It was a recreation that brought home deeper to Oliver's heart the career that was his father's. Here were, in the little reminiscences or in editorials, hints of ideals that ennobled the life of Colonel Plunket: speeches or essays or letters that spoke more eloquently to him than they ever had to the audiences to which they were addressed.

And where Oliver stopped for some com-

ment, his mother knew what interpretation or note would elucidate the text. There, for instance, was a letter addressed to Mrs. Plunket shortly after her husband's death. Oliver could not catch its full significance, though the writer was a former Governor of Massachusetts and he knew how to use clear language.

"The incident he speaks of, Oliver, is this," the mother explained. "The Governor, though he was acquainted with father during many years, did not know that he was a Catholic, till one morning, meeting father who was just coming out of the church—his morning visit—he said, 'Why, Colonel Plunket, I did not know that you go here.' And father answered, 'Yes, Governor, I must report to my Commander-in-chief every morning, you know.' That is the allusion in the letter you have read."

And then Oliver made his mother repeat for him (this, perhaps, the hundredth time), the incident of his father's death: how Colonel Plunket, coming out of the church one morning, felt a spurt of blood towards the left of his

forehead, where a ball had struck him in the fight at Chancellorsville. He recognized this reeling up-rush of the blood as the summons of death. Quickly he lifted his hand, as for a salute, and then made the Sign of the Cross, knelt down on the sidewalk and there as death closed upon him he met his Commander-in-chief.

Out of these hours of intimate home-talk Oliver grew more disposed to speak about himself and his prospects for the future. By degrees he came to tell his mother of his considerations, of his hopes and what held them away from being realized in the past. He narrated, of course, the history of that distant August day when he went on an "embassy" to Glendalough, and spoke with Father Campion. Since then, he said, impulses had come to him, eliciting his will and affections, as it were towards the career to which he had gone to inquire about; and reasons which at that time seemed cogent enough as far as their logic went were now so much clearer, and had a force that no mere logical construction could give them.

So the mother by means of these frequent talks came to know enough about a tendency that was growing stronger and stronger in Oliver's soul. She kept her reflections to herself, even though with some touches of sorrow she had to feel that her two children would leave her home before many months. But she knew of partings that were far harder to bear, the severer kind of sorrow in the separation at the valley of death, where she parted with her husband and her three dear children who had gone to heaven before they became friends of the world. Oliver's talk and the meaning that it bore home to her opened up another vista of parting; and yet another and somewhat similar vision could she see ahead on Clare's pathway. For Shane Desmond, she could easily surmise, would before another year was passed lead Clare to the altar and then, perhaps, away to another home. Yet, she kept these deductions deep in the silence of her mother's heart. She could ask no greater boon for her son than the life to which she saw him gradually tending; and she knew Shane Desmond like a son, and

could wish no other for Clare. "God's holy will be done" was the conclusion always when she had been thinking or talking to herself of futures that were approaching.

She was not surprised, therefore, when one afternoon early in December Oliver crept up to his mother's room and spoke of the decision that he had made. He had put his father's sword on and pinned on the old, faded epaulettes—all this, to be sure, in a playful way to brighten the hour that was to follow.

"I have come to surrender, Mother Plunket," he said, as he stood smiling in the doorway, and made a slight bow, putting his hand on the sword hilt.

His mother looked up from her knitting, and with a motion of her hand that was intended to be a military gesture, she said with adopted gravity, "The general and his men may retain their arms."

Oliver answered with a salute and said, "The general wishes to come in and talk over the terms of surrender."

Mrs. Plunket moved forward and drew a

chair towards her. Oliver leaning upon his cane approached and sat beside his mother. He put his arm into hers and placed his cheek like a little child against her shoulder and stayed in that manner, silent for a long minute.

"I think you know what it is about, Mother," he began slowly, in a voice more like a whisper. Then, before his mother could speak he went on: "I have let you guess at it, you know, many times. Well," and he put forth his other hand upon the knitting, and looked up into his mother's face, "well, it has come: I mean that I have—I have the vocation that I spoke about. I do want to be a soldier for Christ, a priest, Mother."

Mrs. Plunket turned her glistening eyes away, and dropping her needles she opened her arms and drew her son's head close to her breast. Silence followed for several minutes; and the tears that came were not from sadness or sorrow.

"God's will be blessed, Ollie," were the first words the mother spoke as she sat up again

and put her knitting away in the basket.

"Yes, Mother," he started into his narrative with a vivacious tone, "all along I could see reasons for it that appealed to me, and I found a certain amount of joy in looking at them. But as if it all came suddenly, these reasons leave room for nothing else, and I cannot see now why I did not leap at them before. Now they are the source of joy—the life they stand for is my only desire now."

And so he went on, while his mother listened, her face alight with joy, though at times her feelings stopped where the sense of separation touched them. When Oliver finished with the confession he had come to make, his mother arose, taking him by the arm and bringing him towards the little altar in the corner of her room—the sacred shrine that it was to them with its statue of the Blessed Mother, before which the Plunket household assembled for so many years at their morning prayer, and before they went to sleep at night. Mrs. Plunket knelt down and bowed her head in prayer. Oliver stood for a few moments, unpinning the

epaulettes from his shoulder, and then drawing the sword from its scabbard. These he lifted up and with a bow placed them at the feet of the statue. Then he knelt down in silence at his mother's side.

Clare that very moment came in from her visit to the Shankees. She hastened up to her mother's room and with a quick glance at the scene stopped a moment in wonderment. Then she went over on tiptoe and took her own prie-dieu, waiting there in prayer till her mother arose.

"Oliver has good news to tell you, Clare," said the mother in her gentle way, as she took her daughter's hand.

Clare looked down to see if Oliver's foot was entirely cured, thinking that the news; then up at the sword that lay at the feet of the statue.

"There's the sword, Clare," said Oliver, noticing the anxious look upon his sister's face, and not himself anxious to remove it. "But, I am going to be a soldier," and he paused, while Clare still wondered, "only in a different

kind of army and warfare. "There," and he put out his hand.

The meaning of Oliver's words flashed into Clare's mind at once. She made no exclamation, as a girl might do, but put out her arms and drew her brother towards her. Then wiping her eyes, she kissed him, and said, "Wait till I take off my hat and coat, Ollie, and tell me all about it."

When Clare went out of the room, Oliver, leaning on his mother's arm and moving towards the chairs, said, "To-morrow, Mother, we can talk over the other matter—you know."

"Yes, Ollie," for the mother understood that her son alluded to business arrangements that might have to be made. "And if Clare should marry," she said after a short pause, "for I have been thinking of that, too, I hope that I can have the Gomez children come to live with me. Their dear mother, my dear friend of young school-days, Honor Rogers, would surely let me have that good joy."

Oliver found in this wish of his mother something to make his eyes sparkle with gladness:

for he saw, connected with the joy it might be to his little friends, a consolation that their company would give to his mother when Clare and he were gone.

“And when you have made all your plans, Ollie, I will tell you a little story that will surely interest you.”

Clare entered, and she sat down near her mother and brother, in the great conversation that it was to them, till the servant rang the bell for dinner.

CHAPTER XXII

A GIFT FOR NORA

OLIVER PLUNKET, being in a certain sense the man of the house, very judiciously set to work on such arrangements as ought to be considered in consequence of the great decision he had come to. It was not a matter of providing for the morrow at home that he had to occupy his mind upon. The family moneys were not in his keeping. Yet he had some small possessions of his own, and he wanted to see what might be his mother's pleasure in the disposition of such things as pertained to him.

"I have not much to sell and give to the poor," he remarked, using an oft-quoted phrase, but not with a serious tone. Indeed the smile that accompanied his words was to be interpreted, "I am not speaking literally."

"Still, you can and you must remember the poor," his mother answered, meaning her state-

ment for just what it contained, though she spoke with that quiet modesty which was hers whenever she alluded to their finances and charities. "For instance, there is the little sum to your credit at the bank, the money that father entered for you and Clare, to be divided when either of you should come to leave home on your own life journey. It is five thousand dollars now."

"But Clare is not prepared to go just yet," Oliver came in again with his merry laugh, knowing, however, that his little attempt at playfulness would not annoy his mother or aggravate the serious air with which she was conducting these preliminaries to the family separation.

"You, you are making ready to go, and that is quite enough," was the sober rejoinder. And Oliver thought he detected a slight cast of something like sorrow upon his mother's brow, as she leaned towards the table and began to stroke the writing paper with a pencil.

They went through with their conference in a placid hour. When the arrangements were

concluded these points among others had been determined upon: Oliver was to wait till graduation at Glendalough before he should go away; as a Christmas present to Father Campion he was to send two thousand and five hundred dollars, his half of the bank account that stood credited to Clare and himself.

Clare might retain or dispose of her portion as it suited her later. But this gift from Oliver, and he was to make that clear to Father Campion, was to be employed by the priest for some educational purpose that Father Campion might have in mind. (They knew his interest in such matters.) Some other gift, entirely for Glendalough, would be made in good time by Mrs. Plunket, remembering a wish that her husband had expressed before he died.

These small business concerns being settled, Mrs. Plunket moved from the table and brought forth her little work-box, saying, as she drew out the threads and cloth, "And now, Ollie, for the story that I promised to relate the other day when you made known to me

your determination to go away to the Army, —a black-robed soldier in the war for Christ.”

The story, recounted in an earlier page, was that about the incident of the visit to their afflicted home long ago in Brookville—the day when the young priest accepted the last half dollar from Oliver’s mother and uttered these words, “You will live to see this boy say Mass at the altar of that church.”

“And now for the first time have I told you of that day and those words, Ollie,” said the mother, drawing towards the end of her narrative. “I wanted first to have you tell me what plan you would make for your future.”

Then with an evident effort to terminate her relation with cheerfulness, though a sigh betrayed the misgiving in her feelings, she concluded, “Now that I know your purpose, I must feel that the words of the priest are not to come true.”

“What makes you say or even think that, Mother?” asked Oliver with genuine surprise, both in tone and look.

“Why, child,” she replied gravely, yet with-

out a touch of sadness, "you must spend twelve or fourteen years, as you have just said, in preparing for the altar." She turned her head, with a gentle look, asking, "Where shall I be by that time?"

"Where?" said Oliver, as if there could be any doubt on a question so answerable. "You will be right in the very first bench, whether it is a chapel or a cathedral. That's where you will be." And he put his arms about her neck. "And the very first day after that, when you are rested and care to travel, we shall go straight to Brookville. All the others will come, too, Clare to play the organ, and Nora and Margie and Aileen may sing in the choir; and you may put another half-dollar in the poor-box when it comes by. And there's the half-dollar now," he spoke with great make-believe at a sweeping gesture, as he deposited the silver coin in his mother's hand, closing his own upon it.

The mother had to smile at the action, while to the little fervid speech she said, "God's will be done, Ollie."

"But, Mother," he went on, "I mean to ask Father Campion to help us all to reach that day in Brookville. I know that he will get some children to pray for that. I will ask him directly." Oliver started toward the door; and waving his hand to his mother, said, "I will write our Christmas letter to Father Campion at once."

Father Campion had not yet returned to Glendalough from the journey he went upon in his missions and retreats. He had gone as far south as Virginia, and taking a little furlough he was going to spend the Christmas days in Maryland, at the old novitiate in Frederick. While in those parts he would visit many of the hills and valleys made famous during the Civil War; and then what stories, what tales of familiar places would he not have to entertain his young friends at Glendalough!

Oliver's letter reached him at Frederick four days before Christmas. But it was not to the Plunkets that he wrote first upon receipt of that letter. He immediately took his pen to write a very important statement to Nora Go-

mez, being anxious to have it come to her on the eve of Christmas.

Oliver's letter contained in great part much of the news that we are acquainted with. "I have come at last into the blessed possession, dear Father," he went on to say. "I do now, thanks to God's grace, feel the earnest desire to live by the Counsels, to follow that pathway which long ago appealed to me, to my mind more than to my heart, but now most to my heart."

Then alluding to the check for two thousand and five hundred dollars which was enclosed, "a little Christmas present to you," he added. "You will please accept it with the best wishes of mother and Clare and myself. And may I say that this is to be used entirely as you wish to make it serve. It is not for the college. Mother will give something to Glendalough on another occasion, perhaps very soon. With regard to this little sum, mother and I felt that you very probably know of one or two young people whom you wish to send to school for a year or two. This little penny

might help in that way. Do use it so, if it pleases you, as it will please us. For, if you will pardon this request, you might (and will you, Father, please?) get these young children to pray that mother will live to see me say Mass at the altar of our church, our little country church of long ago, that is, as mother says, if it is God's holy will."

Before the letter concluded, the priest was made acquainted with the football accident, and he was told not to be surprised very soon to hear the announcement of a marriage between Shane Desmond and somebody that lived at the Plunket house. And finally he was informed that the Gomez family was very well and happy; Nora, having seemed somewhat dispirited, was now her cheerful self again; and that Margie and Aileen never tired of stories, even though he, Oliver, repeated them a hundred times. "During the Easter holidays," he said in conclusion, "we are going to visit the South to see the old battle-grounds."

Father Campion could easily suffer himself to be nonplussed at all this news, even though

he had prayed for issues that were revealed in the letter. Here was an abundance of causes for thanksgiving; here was an open door to the full joys of Christmas.

Father Campion did not, however, turn immediately to his pen to send a note of acknowledgment to Oliver. He had been waiting anxiously for a favorable opportunity to write to Nora Gomez. For as he departed from Boston, he set his mind to work upon a plan that might feasibly solve some difficulties that Nora was facing. "Now," said he to himself as he put Oliver's letter down, "the thing is as simple as two and two."

With something like youthful alacrity, he started at the letter to Nora; but before he wrote ten words the Brother Porter came to his door and announced that "a Mr. Kenneth Shankee was in the parlor and desired to speak with Father Campion."

CHAPTER XXIII

SHANKEE LOOKS BACK

ON that night of the theatre party, almost two months ago, when Oliver Plunket and Kenneth Shankee stood for a few words before the door of the Gomez house, a remark was made that led Shankee to a judgment very wide of the truth. Oliver, in warning Kenneth to keep away from certain respectable people and their home, said, "I know a thing or two about you, and it may be my duty to speak about them."

Now upon this remark Shankee, as he walked back to town, fell into a dozen surmises, one of which easily held his imagination till he reached cover for the night. Plunket's allusion, he fancied—and then felt sure—concerned the disreputable marriage and divorce in Concord; perhaps even the forged checks and the stolen watch. At all events, from fixing upon this conjecture with his imagination,

he quickly induced a state of feeling that prompted him for once in his life to admit that discretion is the better part of valor, and, by token of this argument, that he should quit Boston by the next dawn. His prudence in making such a determination was akin to serpentine wariness; for he was afraid to be hit; moreover, by making a *détour* he could place his own blow safely later. He was cunning enough to realize that it was high time for him to take his ticket of leave, now that the horrible secret was out, as he imagined. He might, nay, he would replenish his purse on other highways, and then under cover of time's dimming shadows he would return to his old haunts and renew his youth, not as an eagle, but like a bird that feeds on dead things.

True to his blind spirit of stubbornness he pushed on. The morning saw him aboard a train for Providence. But despite the propitious name of that city he did not tread streets of gold there. He bitterly watched his few dollars fade away to small dimes and nickels; and at the end of a week he was ready and

willing enough to accept a position in a livery stable.

"Curse it," he cried one noon-time during a brief pause in his toil, "this is worse than that drudgery in Maine. Hang it! I could get plenty of fresh air up in the woods, even if I came near to freezing." And then casting one of his futile glances back at past things (brief and unavailing were his retrospects hitherto), he gasped out one of his puny exclamations of revenge. "That little pet of a Plunket! Some day I'll get—" But he could not finish the harmless threat. His glance at the past, as well as his improbable wish about the future was cut short.

"Say, Squiggins," a brusque voice from the office below shouted the name that Shankee went by there. "I say, Squiggins!"

"Here I am, sir," Kenneth answered, while he almost bit his tongue with rage, being obliged to obey the rough summons.

"Come down here, and be quick about it," peremptorily called the manager. "Here! Get on your togs and give a lift to a couple

that want to go from the Pimlico Hotel to the New York boat."

Kenneth detested the situation that he must face. But he quickly donned the heavy blue coat with its big brass buttons, and put on the ugly high hat of shining patent leather.

"You ought to get shaved," said the man, looking daggers. "I don't want our coachmen going out like tramps. Understand?"

Ten minutes later Kenneth was standing before the Pimlico Hotel, holding the carriage door open for a young man and woman.

Horrors! a cold shiver shot through him, when he recognized the man for one of the Branston Club in Boston. He fancied that he heard his own name whispered as he closed the door, and surely there was a giggle from the tourists as he mounted the box.

Five days later, with a week's wage in his pocket, Kenneth Shankee dismissed himself from the service in the livery stable. He was callous enough in most departments of feeling, but there were certain phases of ridicule that he could not relish. He would go beyond the

reach of knowing eyes. His own inner eyes of conscience were purblind. He would not fatigue their feeble sight with a too constant observation of himself; but he must vanish from the ridicule of people before whom he had posed in other days.

Yet he did not meet with success as a soldier of fortune when he set his feet towards a southern trail. Winter was coming fast upon that part of the world, and as Kenneth knew the rudiments of geography he very logically decided that the winter, if one has not a roof over his head, is more tolerable in the Southern States than in the unsympathetic cities of the North.

He did not possess a pair of seven-league boots to make the journey in an expeditious way. Therefore did he condescend to look at a freight train. But lacking the skill to mount a train while it is in motion, and besides, the sarcasm of a brakeman in the caboose who called out to him to "get a move on, and try a mule," made him think of another conveyance. He found a sailing vessel, bound for

Baltimore, ready to take him and give him passage for what work he could do. Aboard he went, the first time that he had been in fact though not in fancy "before the mawst."

Baltimore maintained a dignified silence towards him when he looked about its streets. So he walked over to Washington by slow stages. Whether he was chagrined or not, the National Capital was not expecting him; and, be it due to democratic nonchalance or republican reserve, he was allowed to pass on without the slightest token of recognition.

Out near the canal in Georgetown, he met with a coal-barge that would engage him as muleteer. And in that capacity he went west as far as Point-of-Rocks. Then without much ceremony he presented his resignation and received a half dollar.

Now there have been times when men of character "flung themselves down in a lonely mood to think," as Bruce of Scotland before he went to win a throne; and again the more celebrated Prodigal, who had the courage to cry out of the abyss of degradation, "I will arise."

But Kenneth Shankee was not as such. "I will go on," was more likely to be his challenge to any sentry on the road ahead, or upon the banner that he trailed in the mud. He had heard, as he came along the Potomac canal, that there was a place for tramps near Frederick; but he did not stay to inquire into the conditions for receiving hospitality in that county house—namely, that wayfarers may have a cot over the negro quarters, and some soup and bread, but they must work on the county roads in exchange for these considerable bits of sustenance.

It was a hard and tiring road towards his destination. Great elbows of the Blue Ridge stuck out at every turn; the South Mountains and the Catoclin summits stood frowning in his way. And the bitter December winds cracked their whips across his cheeks and ears as he dragged himself along.

He might have cut off several miles from his desolate journey by aiming for Frederick through Petersville and Jefferson. But somebody had directed him to take the Middletown

road, a wide circuit to his haven, but one that fortunately proved to be for him a salutary course, in as much as it caused him for once in his life to pause with his inner self and take a blessing from some reminiscences that arose during a halt on the mountainside. A barren scene it was, yet he could cull a flower of memory there.

Shankee's father, it will be remembered, belonged to the Irish Brigade in the Civil War; a Captain he was of a Company in the Second Brigade under General Meagher. And in his young days at home Kenneth Shankee came to know by heart the names of men and places that were associated with his father's military experiences. Times out of count, as any soldier's son will, he had listened to his father's stories and the conversations with other men of the Brigade in happier hours long ago. Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville—he knew of them as he knew a reading lesson at school. Years of disregard for all that concerned his father's memory had passed by; and it is small surprise that he had obliterated from

his mind, in great part if not entirely, the erudition that his childish heart had found so interesting.

But here he now was, alone and desolate, among scenes that once seemed so familiar, which even now, out of his decimated memory, cried up to him with a fond appeal. Battered as every physical and moral feeling was within him, his heart kindled at the touch of old memories. There was Harper's Ferry, that pass far-off in the mountains, an old man told him while he stopped before a squatter's cabin near Crampton's Gap high up the ridge.

"Right yonder thire," said the old man, pointing to a crest about five miles distant, "right in thire is a monument whire Reno fell. And thet road, see, ye see a kind o' clearin' in the woods? why thet's Turner's Gap. Burnside was in command that day."

Then observing that the young man was attentive and apparently interested, the mountaineer, glad to have a chance to exercise his loquacity in that solitude, drew extensively upon his fund of war narratives, until he

sounded one name that was as magic to Kenneth Shankee. "An' if ye lean down jist a bit, or step over here out o' way o' thet tree, ye'll likely git a glimpse o' whire Antietam lies, thire west'ard a bit."

Antietam! the word was a charm for emotion even to the obdurate heart to which it spoke just then. Antietam! was not the word as familiar as the number upon his house door? Did he not know of the river, and of Dunker's church, and of Roulette's house, and a hundred other landmarks there, quite as if they were the environs of his own street at home? Had he not recited a little piece of declamation that his father wrote for him? had he not recited it a score of times for visitors who came to spend an evening with the family? There, how vividly it all came back to him:—"When French's Division and its new supply of troops were in sore distress, the Irish Brigade was sent in on the left of Dunker's church. Against the terrible onslaught the Brigade slowly but steadily forced the enemy back beyond the sunken road. . . . Five color bearers with the

Green Flag were shot down successively in a short time; and as the last man fell, even these Irish warriors hesitated to follow up a task that was synonymous with death. . . . Then came 'Big Gleason,' the Captain of the Sixty-third. Six feet seven was he, and the courage of a lion in every inch of him. He stood for a moment, and then sprang forward and snatched up the Green Banner. In a minute a bullet struck the staff and shattered it into pieces. Gleason tore the flag from the staff, wrapped it about his body, putting his sword-belt over it, and went through the fight to the end."

With these and other snatches out of old lines that he used to recite in a childish enthusiasm, Kenneth Shankee pushed on along his dreary road upon the mountainside. He found a certain consolation in giving his thoughts over to the chastening reflections; and one by one the threads of his former audacity began to snap and break, till, as it would seem, there was no fibre of his former self left untouched.

Had the weather been less forbidding, he might have ventured forth towards Turner's Gap to obtain a nearer view of his once-beloved Antietam. But he was not prepared to endure the biting winds. Moreover, night was fast coming on, and as he moved down the road an old weather prophet said to him, by way of salutation, "An' thire will be snow afore mornin', I reckon."

Shankee, therefore, took the most direct road he could find towards his goal beyond the next group of hills. It was dark when he arrived in Middletown; and beating about for shelter against the freezing night winds and the probable snow, he found all the sheds locked. Even the old tumble-down blacksmith-shop near the clump of willow trees, though it looked open at a dozen points, shook its rattling hinges and loose chains, as if in scornful laughter at him. The prognostication about the weather came true; for the snow was beginning to fall; and Shankee accepted the only roof he could find, —a covered bridge that stood across the creek. Gathering a huge armful of tamarisk boughs

and pine-needles to soften the boards and to allay the biting frost, he crept in between one of the double-walled sides of the bridge, and managed to establish himself for the night. If sleep did not come to him in long draughts, he got something quite as good, something that was far more beneficial to the nobler part of a man. Asleep or awake, his dreams brought him back to young and innocent days; through the rifts in black clouds he could see the golden sunshine that once was his; and before morning sent its gray light through the crevices in the bridge, he was brave enough to sigh for a pathway he had missed.

By noon—it was Saturday—he reached Frederick, and straightway he walked briskly to the county poorhouse. To tell what his impressions were of the sight that met his eyes as he awkwardly shuffled into the tramps' quarters would be beside our present purpose. One incident alone that befell him the following week is sufficient to recount here.

Father Campion, who came to Frederick to spend the Christmas holidays after his various

missions since he left Boston, went over to the poorhouse one afternoon "to round up some old-timers," as he said. It was customary for one of the priests of the novitiate to visit the place at least once a month for the purpose of hearing confessions and, on the following morning, to say Mass. When Father Campion had succeeded in getting all to confession who should go, one of the tramps, a sort of guide to the visiting priest, said, "I think that fellow is a Catholic, Father." He was pointing towards Kenneth Shankee. "I saw him kneel down at his bunk the other night and make the Sign of the Cross."

Father Campion took the hint, and after a brief conversation with the newcomer, he led him towards the little attic room that served for a confessional. And though at first sight it will appear a matter for surprise that Kenneth Shankee, only a fortnight ago lost to anything like religious influences, should now be at the feet of a priest, we need but recall the discipline he has been through since he left the scene of his depraved career. The long, lonely

vigil that night in the bridge was in itself a palpable grace; and who may name the countless other graces that he, like any wanderer in this valley of tears, had received in his desolation? Moreover, he had met in Father Campion one who was accustomed to lead hearts such as his back to other pathways. And that very attic above the negro wards in the Frederick poorhouse had been, long before Shankee visited it, a spiritual lavatory to many a distressed and wayward soul. Young and old, men of various conditions in life, who had in countless ways of association with the world, the flesh, and the devil, come to drink the dregs of bitterness, had found here, even in the midst of abhorrent physical conditions, an oasis for repentance and for a refreshment that started poor derelicts forth with a new and sure hope.

Kenneth Shankee's long story to the priest is, of course, a secret. Almost an hour elapsed before he came out of the little room. Then as if the hot air of the dormitory was unbearable, he went out to the yard; and as Father Campion drove by, Kenneth was standing

alone and pensive near a tree, though the wind was blowing fiercely across the valley. His eyes were not intent upon some future pathway; full of a new blessing they were at last looking back sorrowfully over the past.

CHAPTER XXIV

SOME CHRISTMAS LETTERS

FATHER CAMPION, much as he desired to attend to some urgent Christmas letters, went immediately to the parlor to see Kenneth Shankee and to give him all the time that the poor, desolate visitor might require. And indeed the conversation that followed was a very lengthy one, and before it terminated, Kenneth Shankee was taken to the dining-room (the little room for such guests, with an inscription over the door that said, "*Venit hospes, venit Christus*"); and then to the clothes-room, where the ragged garments of the wanderer were exchanged for things that stood somewhere near to respectability.

When towards the end of the hour Kenneth told the priest that he proposed to go west, Father Campion drew a pocket-book and from it took a railroad ticket, saying, "You will do me a favor, if you will accept this." And

when Kenneth showed reluctance to accept it, the priest added, "Why, as you see, the ticket will be of no use after a few days, and I shall not be able to use it before that. It will take you as far as New York. You have my little letter to a friend there who will be able to start you out on the new road."

Shankee allowed the ticket to be placed in his pocket. "Will you write a letter to Gwenny for me, Father?" he asked in a low voice full of tenderness, as he arose to take leave of his kind friend. You know that a man's hair may turn white in one night under some fearful ordeal; and under influences of another kind Kenneth Shankee as suddenly had transformed his manner of speech from its stilted drawl to a sweet and gentle naturalness. "You will know what to tell her, Father," he added. "I promised her to send good news sometime. I leave to you what should be said."

Father Campion very willingly accepted the little commission, as he bade a hearty farewell to Kenneth. His were eyes that now did not

hesitate to show tears to the old priest who stood at the doorway. Then Kenneth Shankee brushed away the tears, and bowed a humble head, as he started down the street for the train to New York. And Father Campion went back to his delayed correspondence.

It would be a busy day for his pen, the numerous greetings that came to him at this season had to be acknowledged, howsoever briefly. But to him, the most important, and one therefore that should be despatched immediately, was to Nora Gomez. Even that would only contain a portion of all he wished to say.

Father Campion on his itinerary since he left Boston had not neglected to busy himself about Nora's circumstances in the matter of her vocation. Feeling that the chief difficulty that stood in her way was the need of her care for Margaret and Aileen, he took time to call at Kenhurst to confer with the nuns about the education of two children. He mentioned no names, nor did he allude even in a general way to the conditions in which his protégées were situated. But he made his calculations before

he departed from Kenhurst; and now Oliver's letter and the gift it contained capped all his expectations as perfectly as if he had figured on just such a solution. It was precisely an issue that he had prayed for. The sum of money that was this very morning placed at his disposal, and expressly for the purpose he had in mind, would, under the concessions made by the nuns, meet the school expenses of the two children for four or five years. Moreover, Oliver hinted also at the wish his mother was entertaining, that when he and Clare should leave home, the Gomez children would come to the Plunket house and stay with his mother.

Here then was a dawn that bespoke a cloudless day. And straightway having expressed his Christmas greetings to Nora and her family, he went on to write about the matter of the convent. Nothing had he heard of the offering that Nora made over a month ago in favor of the vocation to which Father Campion alluded once at Glendalough.

"And now, Nora," his letter continued, after the salutations, "I want to say a word or two

about the subject of our talk at Glendalough last August, and merely one brief word shall it be.

“You recall the visit and the subject of our conversation. You felt that you must remain at home to attend to the education of Margaret and Aileen, and that was the impediment in the way of your fulfilling a great desire. Now, my dear child, here is my proposal, and I sincerely hope that it will have your willing acceptance. You must not ask any questions about the hows and the wherefores, nor imagine a score of improbable things about difficulties and inconveniences to me that come of this. For they do not exist. You surely know that even a useless old man, such as I am, may have good angels to help him now and then, and who and where my good angels are, you must not even try to conjecture.

“My proposal is this: I want to send Margaret and Aileen to Kenhurst. I have just been able to make such arrangements, that is, to have them attend the Academy for five years, and by that they will be big girls and

ready to take care of themselves. Their summers at home will be well attended to, as you can see. Molly and Diarmid and the Plunkets will see to that." (Father Campion did not mention the Plunket prospect on that point.)

"Now you must understand me correctly, Nora. I want you to accept this proposal entirely independently of the decision you have at this present moment with regard to your own vocation. Yes, indeed, my dear child, this must not, and it is not intended to bear on you as a persuasion to go to the convent. You must look at that matter absolutely unprejudiced by this new circumstance. So, I repeat, whether you still wish to go to the convent or not, I want to place the two children at Kenhurst. I need not add that this is a little secret between ourselves."

Thereupon, having written some lines that were full of the Christmas spirit, he directed another letter to Oliver Plunket, a hearty message with a double meed of thanksgiving, first to the Giver of all good gifts for the great grace that had been bestowed upon his young

friend, and secondly for the generous donation that Oliver enclosed in his letter.

"It will serve for the very purpose you named, Oliver," he added. "And the prayers of two young hearts, yea, of three, and my own, a fourth, though no longer young, will follow you through the years."

Then before he turned himself to other mail, he made a little note for Kenneth Shankee's sister.

"My dear little Gwenny:

"Here is an old stranger, verily an old stranger writing to you. And yet he ought not to be such a stranger, since he knew your father very well; indeed, he was the speaker at your father's funeral. And now I am almost within view of battle-fields where your father won victories.

"Well, my child, I am writing now to tell you that Kenneth was in these parts even as recently as this morning. I believe he will soon set out for the West. He is very well, and I think that the visit he made here has done

him a world of good. I told him that I would write to you, as he himself requested me to do. And perhaps I shall see you sometime in Boston, if you can find your way out to Glendalough.

“Kenneth has prepared for Christmas, and, therefore, it is with a glad heart that he sends to you and to all at home an earnest wish for a blessed and merry Christmas; as I do, too,

“Your no-longer-strange friend,

“FATHER CAMPION.”

CHAPTER XXV

CHRISTMAS EVE

THE letter from Father Campion reached Nora late on the afternoon of Christmas Eve. Only the servant was with her in the house at the time. Her two sisters were staying the day with the Plunkets; Diarmid was at his office downtown, Molly at her own mother's house, where she and Diarmid would pass the next few months. And Molly would be the only one missed from the gathering of intimate friends that evening; the Plunkets would be there, and Shane Desmond, and a score of others whose names were intimate and welcome sounds to the home on Massachusetts Avenue. Carols would be sung; stories would be told and retold; and, as in the old days when Nora's father was courting Honor Rogers, many an old piece would be recited by Diarmid to please a lover of such things, Mrs. Plunket.

Busy indeed was Nora arranging for the

evening party. Yet when the letter arrived (and she immediately recognized the handwriting in the superscription) she went directly away to her room to find out its message.

The unlooked-for news that the letter contained, nay the startling announcement that it made to her, opened a flood of emotions through her body and soul. She could not with anything like a process of thought deliberate then and there upon Father Campion's proposal. How could she be cool and collected in the face of so sudden an apparition? All the past weeks, since she made the offering of her beloved desire, she never allowed her thoughts to drift back to that old subject of the convent; and in that period of time, under the discipline to which she subjected her mind, she had grown quite accustomed to the distance that she had put, as she thought, between her life and the convent. No voice had assured her that the offering was accepted; reason had very little to extend towards an answer. But Nora, as far as she could, had conducted herself in mind and will as if her prayer had been

heard. She attended as of old to her regular practises of piety. But she kept herself entirely passive in regard of that one desire which in times past had been joy to her earnest heart, nay more, she was active in repulsing any recurrence of her former feelings, lest by entertaining them she might diminish or at least seem to dim the sincerity of the offering she had made.

She read and reread the letter until her mind, as it seemed to her, became dazed. From one room to another she went, trying to find a fit place to steady her feelings and to support the mental conflict that grew worse with every effort to still it. Up and down, from room to room, and back to her writing-desk she wandered. What could she do? Where might she turn? How could she know? A hundred questions waiting for no answer beset her at every turn. She slipped down upon her knees at the prie-dieu, but no words would rise up from her soul in prayer.

She could not protract this state of mind: she must not wait any longer in this useless excite-

ment. The evening was fast coming on, and friends would soon assemble. Erect again she stood, and looked about as if it were possible for some helpful vision to appear. But not even the air stirred to her half-expectancy. Then with a vigorous effort she caught at her feelings, smiled at the perturbation through which she had just passed, and turned quietly from the room.

"Kate, dear," she said to the servant, "we must make haste, for I am good only to spoil time."

"Thin, haste makes waste is a true sayin', darlin'," answered Kate.

"But they will soon be here," answered Nora.

"Sure we are waitin' for them to come," Kate readily replied, smiling good-naturedly. And glancing at the apparently anxious countenance of her young mistress, she added, "It's a half hour yet before the earliest of them will come. And you ought to step out for the feel o' the brisk air. Do now. You're lookin' that pale just now that I will not know what to be

sayin' to Diarmid when he comes in and asks me, as he does be doin' a hundred times, if you have been worryin'."

"A half hour we have yet, right you are, Kate," Nora bowed pleasantly. "And I think I will take your advice. I will have time to walk as far as the church. I will not be gone long," adding this because Kate had expressed a fear that a visit to the church would take all evening. And in a very few seconds Nora had donned her hat and cloak and was going out the door before Kate could whisper another one of her cautionary remarks.

Kate hastened to the door "after the speed-away," as she said to herself, and called out, "But don't be walkin' ahead of yourself, Nora dear. Sure the night is long, and we can give you an hour. There now, take your time, darlin'."

Nora had been to confession early that afternoon. Her visit to the church now was for another purpose.

She quickly stepped towards the front of the lower chapel to the corner where the crib had

just been made ready. An elaborate piece of work it was; and for a few minutes in childish delight Nora's eyes scanned the entire scene from the proscenium, as it were, where the shepherds were gathered, to the far background where in accurate perspective the distant Magi were drawing near to Bethlehem from their eastern mountains, bringing rich treasures to the new-born King.

Now it was these symbols of the Magi that held Nora's eyes and appealed most to her imagination, and by way of that faculty to her mind. For the shepherd-images, being nearer to the crib, were not or rather just at that time did not seem to be a counterpart of herself, as the Magi did. Like them, she stood farther away, on the road that her soul was traveling, far-off in distant valleys and on rugged high-ways like the men from the East. Would she, too, come even as they did eventually to the great Goal, near to the King, "and go back to her own country by another road?" They had to turn aside at times to make inquiry; in Jerusalem they were sent to consult Herod, and he

in turn directed them for advice to the keepers of the Great Books and the Traditions. Whither was she to turn? Where for her was a star beckoning onward, as that which loomed ahead of the Magi?

So ran her little childlike thoughts and queries during that eager visit before the crib. She put impetuosity from her and allowed no bewildered phantasies to beset her brain. True to her character she gathered all her energies together and locked up all causes of disquiet into a silent chamber of her heart.

"What offering, dear Lord, may I now make to Thee," she was saying with her tranquil whisper, as her eyes fell upon the image of the Infant King. "What treasure have I to place at Thy feet? Thou knowest my present need. Thou dost see the utter helplessness of my soul. O, which way is my life to turn to find Thee?"

And she hung her head in silence as if an answer might be vouchsafed to her attentive soul. No voice came up out of her heart, yet she arose with that feeling of renewed strength that always waits upon prayer, a strength that

may at times be accompanied with little or even with no joyous consolation, but still it brings unfailingly the power to be patient and endure.

Mrs. Plunket, who had brought the children home, was waiting near the door when Nora returned. "Oliver will not come for at least an hour yet," she said. "He went down to Shankee's for Clare. So you go right on with the evening, and do not wait for them. We can get a hot cup of tea for them when they come."

Soon the others began to arrive, merry voices and glad faces and gladder hearts, warm with jubilant greetings and with the feelings that run through the hearts of men and women, and doubly so in the hearts of children, on the Eve of Christmas.

Nora had quite succeeded in banishing every semblance of the recent stress of mind she had been through. Indeed to her brother Diarmid she seemed more than ordinarily happy. Her mind was alert for every topic that fell in upon the conversation. Her enthusiasm for Shane's stories was even greater than that of

her little sisters. And after the supper, when she gathered the group by the piano to sing the Christmas carols, she was both in voice and in the accompaniments more spirited than ever before. Yet she did not forget, for all her efforts to appear so elate of mind, that there was a letter up-stairs in her room which was to have her deepest consideration again that night, when the bright hours of merry friendship would pass and leave her to a solitude of soul.

A telephone message broke in on the light-hearted party. Clare Plunket was speaking, and Nora detected a tremor and an excitement in her tone. Clare announced that Oliver would not arrive till late into the night. Nora made no inquiry about the cause of the delay, neither did she observe when Oliver entered that he was dressed in an old suit of clothes, as if he had been masquerading. And it was not till the end of the old year that Clare confided to her the history of the terrible accident that detained Oliver from the party that Christmas Eve.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE DREAM RETURNS

WHEN Kenneth Shankee arrived in New York, or rather as he stood gazing through a window on the ferryboat across to the irregular line of tall buildings towards which he was steering, his thoughts were engaged not with the new west and a future ahead of him, but with old landmarks at home and a past that should have been his. He carried in his inner pocket the address that Father Campion gave him before he set out from Frederick. There would he be able to confer with a Saint Vincent de Paul man about his destination in the west, where, be it prairie or city, he might begin life anew.

Kenneth allowed all thoughts of that possible conference to slip from his mind, not out of neglect but because of a subject that forced his feelings towards a different direction. It was an emotion that held every

avenue of his mind and will in fast keeping.

To suggest what the origin was of this new mental attitude might at first arouse nothing but incredulity. But we have in some small way at least followed Kenneth Shankee during his recent weeks of stern moral discipline. We have seen him turn, with almost the instantaneousness of an electric flash, from a conduct that was a habit with him, the habitual tendency to push on along a reckless path with full audacity, cost what it would. And now after a series of unrelenting chastisements, he becomes rather a pilgrim to the past, giving his heart the salutary enjoyment of shriving, regret and repentance. Westward, as the trite line has it, the course of empire takes its way. Thither for Kenneth Shankee, as for millions of men before him, lies a dawn that is not without hope. But who plays prophet for Kenneth Shankee?

It is a season of the year when a great force is astir in the world; and under its influence men will halt in their plotting and planning, will air the dark rooms of care, and let the

light of childhood gleam in forgetful places, till flesh and blood seem akin with spirit, so lightsome, so potent to leap the bounds of space and time and mingle with a world that takes a foothold on this earth of ours at Christmastide. A few, perhaps, a few pessimists who have lost the sunshine and the freshness of youth and of its hold on truth, may call this sentiment of Christmas a banality. But the sentiment maintains its wide-reaching domain nevertheless. Young and old welcome it and follow its gentle call, a voice far stronger than that decree which summoned the subjects of an old empire to return and be enrolled in their native cities, long ago when Christmas had its birth on the hills of Bethlehem.

Kenneth Shankee, not even by the farthest stretches of imagination, can be said to hear voices out of native places calling to him. The Clubs, the rendezvous of many a previous Yuletide, would spurn him from their doors. His home—he shut out, as if it were an insult, the flash of memory that opened a vista of his little house near the Charles River. And yet he

could not rid himself of that indefinite longing that rose within him, of that feeling begotten by the Christmas air, of a great law, though not promulgated by a parliament, that leads thoughts and dreams homeward over every difficulty and through every cloud of dejection.

On by the water-front, along through the crowded thoroughfares, up past the avenues of wealth and the sordid alleys of the poor, this breath of the Christmas air went with him, growing stronger and richer from the lights and voices in a thousand places. And by the time he arrived in the upper part of the city, he had a response, a full-hearted echo to what his accumulated feelings whispered to him all along the journey.

"I will spend the day in Boston—home!" he said, and immediately cast his eye about to discover a means of putting his resolution into effect.

Down in the deep railroad cut underneath the bridge where he stood, a cumbersome freight train was making ready to start, some

of the cars labeled elaborately with marks of "Boston."

Kenneth slipped down to the tracks, and trying to avoid detection ambled onward with a great show of unconcern in the railway gutter. An empty car, its door half-opened, dragged slowly up to him, and with a succession of creaking and sibilant sounds seemed to invite him aboard. Studying the road up and down as he walked leisurely along, he took a favorable chance, sprang up and stood erect in the spacious car. A bundle of bags in the corner gave promise of a comfortable couch. Kenneth did not stir from his concealment till about nine o'clock that night, when he crept over towards the door, and looking out caught the word "Stamford" upon the station they were passing. That assured him of the right direction of his train; he went back to his deep couch in the corner and fell asleep.

When he awoke the train was at a standstill, and the gray light of the morning, the peaceful token of Christmas Eve, was looking in at the doorway. A wild shriek of the

whistle tore the air, and seemed to frighten peace and hope away. Kenneth jumped up, beset in his half-awakened condition with a fear that he might be detected and so bring an increase of disgrace, not so much upon himself as upon the people at home whose name he carried. He saw at a glance points in the landscape that he knew well. There, those houses were in Newton; to the left, these were hills in Brookline. He was within sight of Boston; he could walk the remainder of the way, he said as he sprang lightly down to the gutter between the tracks.

Before he could advance a step further, death with monster eyes came towards him and he flung himself to the ground as if a thousand volcanoes were bearing on him. He did not take notice, before he jumped, that his freight train had gone to a siding to allow a New York "express" to pass. And around the slight turn, the engine at a terrific bound aimed at him just as his feet touched the ground. Like a flash the engineer swung back the levers, all too late, as he had to feel. The whistle again

ripped the air with a fiendish yell and the brakes hissed with the frenzy of a thousand scorpions. Kenneth Shankee, prostrate upon the hard ground, lay motionless there for a time that seemed to him a century of agony, the cold sweat pouring out all over him, and every incident of his past life flashing and reflashng before his terrified soul. How clearly every detail with voices of condemnation appeared in full horror to him!

Then as he arose, still shivering with fright, he saw the express train halt down the road, and he heard the signal to back the cars, doubtless to pick up the mangled body.

Kenneth judged it more expedient for him to be off and away, and he darted across the tracks into a clump of bushes beyond the embankment. Farther into the thicket he went to avoid detection by the trainmen, who with much clatter and shouting searched about, under the car tracks and along by the embankments, for some vestige of the corpse; and finding none, after much parley and much excitement on the part of the passengers, the sig-

nals blew again and the train went on its journey.

Shankee drew back towards a hill, and in a corner of a stone wall sat down to think. Over beyond him on a distant eminence, through the growing morning light he could discern the graceful tower of St. Moville's, and farther to the left the outlines of buildings he knew to be Glendalough.

As he rested there, waiting for his nerves to calm and his quivering muscles to become still, his mind, perhaps owing to associations that Glendalough summoned into his thoughts just then, opened up vividly on the disregarded dream that once he had recounted in a sarcastic manner to old Brother Neville at the College. Unconcerned about the keen frost of the morning, he stayed there in deep recollection, fixing his steady eye on every point of the dream and on the striking coincidence that his recent narrow escape had with it. Over and over again, he studied their parallel lines, the too awful similarity that linked the dream and this hairbreadth deliverance from death, not real-

izing however, as he arose to continue his road, that before the night closed upon him, a closer similarity and a more striking counterpart of his famous dream would meet him and smite him with a blow more disastrous.

Night was already approaching as he halted near the Brookline bridge above the Charles. Thus far he entertained only a vague notion of any purpose in his journey. One landmark was beckoning him, though he would not confess that truth openly to himself—Home, in the light of Christmas, was charming his footsteps onward.

Yet he would not venture to enter his home, howsoever strong his yearning was. He would not shock his mother and sisters by appearing in their presence on that night of peace, even if, as he said to himself, Father Campion had written an assuring word to Gwenny. No! It would be sufficient for him to stand at a little distance from his house, to stand there and let regret beat a storm upon his heart, and repentance flood his soul fuller than ever tide filled the river-bed there by his

side. Then, after the chastening hour before his very house door, and almost within hearing of voices that now were dear to him with a new-created love, he could wander about among the scenes of his lost opportunities, and then speed forth, unwept and alone, away to the far west, to hide his past in the oblivion which might be conceded to it.

Slowly in the gathering darkness he pushed on by the river wall, along by that narrow driveway between the water and the houses on Marlborough Street, an obscure alley even in the daytime, and therefore to Kenneth, as he moved on towards Charles Street, secluded enough for his peregrination.

The tide was out, and in shallow places the broken flotage of ice rested on the black mud of the river-bed. Here and there some scaffolding showed where the alterations were already begun on the river-wall for the new basin that was to be there when the great dam should be constructed across the Charles.

It was at one of these indentures on the riverside that Kenneth halted, knowing that

through an opening in the line of houses he could get a good view of his home there on Charles Street. For a more assuring position to avoid any possible recognition from passers-by (a few stragglers with no very definite pace were to be seen upon the alley), Kenneth stepped over the wooden barriers that enclosed the scaffolding and passed even the danger signals that flickered out of the red lanterns. He could see with a half-averted eye the form of a young man who appeared to be looking towards him. "What if that happened to be Oliver Plunket!" he thought to himself. "I would not care to have him recognize me just now."

Now as old sayings oftentimes come true ("think of a person and he will appear," being one of them) Oliver Plunket was at that very moment standing there on the alley, and gazing at the figure that stood in jeopardy over on the unfinished wall. Oliver, after putting his mother and the Gomez children down at Massachusetts Avenue, rode on to the Harvard Bridge, and instead of pursuing his

course to the Shankee home by way of Beacon Street, he preferred to take the less-crowded alley along by the silent river. The half hour in the quiet would help his Christmas mood. And the first distraction he got was this movement of the figure (he did not know it was Shankee) out on the hazardous brink of the river. His first impulse was to go forward and caution the man. But before he could proceed to express his fears, a crunching noise and a man's cry caused him to start; and quick upon the shout, to his horror he saw the man go over the wall and a huge stone sink down after him.

"Help! Men!" shouted Oliver towards the crowd of people he saw passing in the light of Charles Street. Then flinging off his coat he jumped past the woodwork and slipped down to the ice by a safe part of the wall.

Fortunately the tide was out and the water at that point was not deep. Kenneth, had he fallen by himself, might have stood up in three feet of water and picked his way out from the broken ice. But the great square of stone

which had loosened under his weight, and for a moment held to its position after he fell, dropped upon him as he lay stunned in one of the fissures of the ice. The huge rock might have crushed life out of him had it not been that the ice gave way and so destroyed the full force of the impact. Owing to that saving circumstance, the stone merely slid under the water upon the body of Kenneth Shankee, though that should have spelled death to him, had not Oliver Plunket in less than a minute removed the weight and dragged the body from the mud in which it was imbedded.

Men were waiting on the alley to receive the two men from the water, a policeman assuming command of the rescuing party.

"Would you please send somebody for a priest?" Oliver gasped breathlessly. And the officer quickly dismissed a boy on that errand.

Shankee lay apparently lifeless, and through the heavy smearings of mud on his face the blood trickled from a cut on his forehead. Gently the dirt and blood were washed away, yet no signs of life returned to the body.

"You'd better get under cover and take off those wet clothes," said the policeman to Oliver. "Where does this man belong? We'll put him home, if you know."

Oliver did know, but he also knew that this was not a burden to be brought into Mrs. Shankee's home that night. A catastrophe such as this, if it came to Mrs. Shankee's knowledge, would put her in the grave simultaneously with her son's burial.

"Here is my card," said Oliver when he had wrapped himself in his big coat again. "Take this man to the hospital. You have my address. I'll come down and attend to other arrangements as soon as I get a change of clothes."

The big black police-ambulance, which had been summoned by the officer as he darted down from Charles Street to the scene of the accident, arrived and the wet, corpse-like body was wrapped in blankets and put aboard. The priest arrived and jumped into the carriage.

Oliver halted the driver, and then whispered to the priest, "Please do not give out the name,

Father. I will take charge of everything. I am going over to his house now, but they must not know. It would kill them."

Then he sped towards one of the by-streets and rushed along till he came shivering with cold and excitement to the Shankee door:

CHAPTER XXVII

LITTLE CHRISTMAS

TWELVE days had passed since Nora Gomez received that remarkable letter from Father Campion; twelve days that were full of anxiety and trial to her, though others of the household during this festal time did not detect it. Indeed, the mental struggle exceeded anything of a like nature that she had to go through during all the past months, even the sorrowful heart that she took out to Glendalough that early August day, or the night of the great sacrifice when she prayed God to take back the gift, if it pleased Him so to do, and give it to Oliver Plunket, that is to the young searcher after the great vocation, who, though Nora did not know, was Oliver.

Here now was the new problem, and how should Nora discover the answer? Father Campion, by his offer to educate the children, had put a possibility in her way again. She

was free to go to the convent if she still desired to go. Moreover, Oliver's mother came in on New Year's Day, and, after the usual subjects of talk had been attended to, she put forth an urgent request to Nora on another point that had to do with the children, one that also concerned Nora very intimately.

"I thought of this a long while ago, Nora," she said, coming closer to one who was all but a daughter to her; "and you will not therefore think it a sudden whim. I need not get at it in a roundabout way; you cannot take amiss the good will I have in it. I want you to promise to let Margie and Aileen live with us, that is," and she smiled at the hint which she was giving by correcting her word, "with me during the summer, and indeed whenever they are at home from school. I ask this as a favor to me, Nora, for I will enjoy their company, and," with a little inclination of her head as if in sorrow, "perhaps I shall need their company."

Now Mrs. Plunket, when she alluded to the home-coming of the children from school for

their vacation months must not be supposed to have guessed at a situation that Father Campion and remotely Oliver Plunket had made possible. She was entirely ignorant of the real state of conditions on the score of the Gomez finances. She supposed, and she was correct there, that the Gomez family was not poor, but she was not aware that Nora's fortune was so limited as to prevent her from sending her two sisters away to school. Accordingly Mrs. Plunket had conjectured, as you may see from her remark, that the children were soon going away, and would return for vacations now and then.

"And you are to come yourself, Nora, and stay with us," the mother afterward added, "if you are at all near us." And noticing the large look of surprise on Nora's face, she said, "I am making no guesses about your future, my dear, nor am I prying into it. And I will tell you by Easter why I say now that I will need the company of my dear darlings."

And at these words Nora threw her arms about this motherly friend, and began to cry—

not tears of grief, however (and Oliver's mother would have stopped them immediately), but tears from other sources, and Mrs. Plunket was not prepared to ask what they were, nor was Nora ready just now to tell.

Here then was the very ground where the new struggle arose. Margaret and Aileen were now provided for, if Nora would accept the friendly proffers; first their education would be attended to, and then they would have a home, a home after her own heart at Plunkets, with Clare and Oliver and their devoted mother.

What a prospect was all this! But ah! to what vista did it lead Nora's eyes! Ahead, was the horizon bright with the vision of a convent life? Far from it. So Nora thought, as she glanced up at first when the prospect opened up to her. Had she not renounced that pathway? Had she not, with a generous heart, made the sacrifice of the cherished desire, of that desire which had been a light to her life for years? She could not know whether the offering was accepted, whether

the prayer had been fulfilled according to the very letter. And, if it had, how could she now call it back, how cast a blemish on the holocaust!

All this was surely the struggle of a simple, innocent heart. Yet however maladroit it may appear to bigger minds (since they would very probably call it a tempest in a teapot) it clearly shows, nevertheless, the earnest sincerity with which Nora had made her noble sacrifice. And who shall venture to say that Nora's prayer was not heard in favor of Oliver Plunket's vocation? Certainly, to human sight it is easy to see that Oliver's gift to Father Campion was the means by which Nora could come back to the consideration of her vocation, and follow, if she wished, the Voice that called her to the life of the Counsels. Yet to other sight, to the eyes of faith it is not difficult to discern that perhaps—perhaps, we say—Nora's great prayer had won for Oliver the vocation, from which, as a consequence, came the gift to Father Campion.

Be that as it may, one thing is historically

certain; Nora was sore distressed with a fear lest, by re-considering her vocation to the convent, she should seem to withdraw a gift that she had placed in other hands.

Fortunately for her peace of mind, she could turn again to Glendalough. Father Campion had come back to his old post (another note in the morning paper gave that information to the city). And Nora determined to seek his counsel, at the same time to make a complete recital of the history of her past half year.

It was the eve of Epiphany. Nora, before she started out to Glendalough, having ascertained by telephone that Father Campion was at home, went first to visit the parish church and to spend a few minutes before the new setting in the Bethlehem scene of the Divine Child.

The rearrangement of the figures in the scene caught her eyes immediately. The wise men, who on Christmas Eve were to be seen in the far background beyond the hills, looking, as if in perplexity, for the surer guidance of their star, were now come close with their

gifts and homage to the new-born King. How peacefully they knelt there after the long journeys of fatigue and perhaps even of bewildering doubt!

And the impression that came from the scene remained deep in Nora's heart till she reached Glendalough. And most obviously it came up for mention in the long talk that followed with the priest.

Father Campion was more than ordinarily touched by the things he learned in that visit. Surely there was a situation that was unique among all the experiences he had met with in his wide life of priestly labors. What a remarkable interchange of gifts had been made by his two young friends! Nora, through a remark that Father Campion unwittingly made about a young man, had spent her own heart's desire in favor of Oliver's welfare; and then, from Oliver's new change in fortune, came the bountiful largess that was to enable Nora to win back a lost hope and follow it.

"And now that you have noticed the wise men in their new relation to the King,"

Father Champion went on to say to the child before him, "let me assure you that you may find an inspiration there for directing your own course now. You see they received a call, they saw the star and they started out. Now here and there the star disappeared—and how common a happening is that in the progress of every soul towards perfection? But they went on; they used everything that nature and grace could give them to support the journey—courage and hope, and reason and prayer. There—that is what you are to do now. Do not be guided by feeling or by imagination. Employ every rational means, as they did, the wise men, when they went to ask advice of Herod. And pray, not anxiously but full of childlike confidence. In a word, dear Nora, see if the same reason, or reasons as good, now prevail as they did formerly when it was so clear to you that your vocation was the convent. Do not be distressed at the loss of the joyous feelings, the consolation that you formerly had. Decide, with the help of God's grace, in the court of reason, even if desolation be the only

witness there. The star you saw, even if it has disappeared for a while, will come out again."

And late into the night, Nora before the little altar in her room, held the great court of inquiry. One by one all the reasons for the life she ambioned a year ago were called up and examined. How utterly cold were their answers! how devoid of the sunny and inspiriting looks with which they formerly presented themselves a thousand times! And Nora's own heart was as frigid and inhospitable as the shivering quests upon which her mind's eye rested. Here was desolation that could test the strength of character. And here did Nora exert the powers of her character, informed as it was, by grace—by that grace which God does not deny to those who do what in them lies.

With every avenue of feeling locked up, without the elation of joyful emotions, alone and in the depths of desolation, Nora Gomez challenged her soul—and that person is stronger who rules his soul than he who takes walled cities. She bravely weighed every re-

sponse, cold and stiff as they gave their testimony before the tribunal of reason. And she took their final answer, the same it was essentially as it had been in the other years; the same, though now deprived of those accidental embellishments that once accompanied it.

Midnight rang out from the church tower nearby. Nora drew her hands down across her face and then back across her eyes, as she arose from the prie-dieu.

"Midnight," she whispered to herself, "and it is Little Christmas," the term she had often heard her mother use for the Epiphany. "I will see the star again to-day," she kept saying as she retired to rest.

And the last image upon her imagination before she fell asleep was the picture of the wise men coming away from the court of Herod, where they had gone to make inquiries. Ahead of them, Nora could see, was the star shining brilliantly.

CHAPTER XXVIII

REVELATIONS

EARLY in February, a date which was far in advance of that which even Mrs. Plunket anticipated when she proposed this move, the Gomez children went to live with the Plunkets. The circumstances that brought about this early introduction of the children to their new home was the arrival of a little son to Molly and Diarmid. Nora, perhaps acting on a new hint from Mrs. Plunket, went to Molly's house (she was living with her own mother since November) and assisted there during the first month after the birth of her little nephew. Thus the home on Massachusetts Avenue was deserted for a few weeks; but what was its loss in the matter of sociable hours was gain to the days and evenings at the Plunket home.

Scarcely a day passed without a visit from Nora to her sisters and the Plunkets. No

vestige of her past anxieties ever appeared now either on her countenance or in her talk. Light-hearted and jubilant, she seemed rather the Nora Gomez of days long ago at Kenhurst, and not the overthoughtful and retiring woman who lived disciplinary hours at the Lincoln cottage and at home in town.

"Is Nora coming this evening?" would be the invariable question of the little groups that assembled with the Plunkets.

"We must keep you with us entirely, Nora," said Oliver's mother one afternoon towards the end of the month.

And the words were not merely the expression of a formality. It required very little acuteness on Nora's part to detect that her dear motherly friend had put her heart into the statement. And Mrs. Plunket, coming over to put her arm about the young woman, looked into her wondering eyes, which now from the playfulness of a few moments ago sank back into their deep thoughtful gravity, seeming to say, "May I hear what you wish to tell? See how I am listening."

"Come to my room, Nora," Mrs. Plunket whispered, "and I will tell you—shall I call it a secret? you have guessed it, if you have not been told it before this."

Nora, as any intelligent person might have done a year ago, even with eyes half shut, did guess at a portion of the news Mrs. Plunket was to give. And laying her cheek against the mother's shoulder, she glanced up out of her beautiful eyes, so full of tender sympathy always, and kept moving her head with an affirmative nod. "I think I can guess it," she said finally.

"Then which is it?" asked Mrs. Plunket with her kindly smile; "is the secret about Clare or Oliver?"

Nora was not prepared to make answer to this. Oliver? Why was his name brought up for conjecture? What concerned him that could be the subject of a confidential piece of news? Nora was here in a quandary. She was ready to say that she surmised something about Clare. And, as an easy and rather probable way towards the right answer to the

mother she said, "Isn't it about my—our Clare?"

"It is news about both of them, Nora," came the answer with a tone of great feeling, as the young woman drew closer to a mother's heart. "It is first about Clare, as you yourself must have foreseen. I need not add that you are the very first person, beyond ourselves at home, to whom I tell this. And Clare, when I spoke to her at New Year's about informing you, said that you, her own little sister, Nora—you very well knew all about it."

Nora made no reply to this, other than putting her own arm into Mrs. Plunket's, leading her to the window-seat.

"But here comes Lent, Nora dear," the mother went on, "and so we will make the announcement to-morrow of Clare's engagement to Shane Desmond. There, that is not news to you." And she looked up, smiling, to bring a kindred look of gladness into the serious countenance near her.

Nora leaned forward to kiss Mrs. Plunket and in her sincere way said, "You know how

delighted I feel for Clare and for all of you, for you and Oliver and for Shane. Surely this makes you happy, for you know Shane so well, as we all do. And what could we say about him that we have not felt and said of him a thousand times?"

"And about Oliver?" the mother went on, as if eager not to protract the hour; for Nora must return to her post at Molly's house. "Now about Oliver?" she asked again.

Nora plainly showed that she had no answer, as she sat back glancing across the room with all her thoughtful yet tranquil soul gleaming in her expectant look.

"Oliver is going, too," said his mother as she drew nearer to Nora and put out her hands, "Oliver is going to be a soldier;" but as Nora, alert to this announcement started with something of surprise, she quickly added, "a soldier with a black robe in the army of Christ."

Nora said nothing for a space of a few seconds, nor did any line in her countenance change with shadow or light, nor her eyes lose their aspect of absorbing attentiveness. Then,

quite overcome with some emotion that seized upon her (an unusual thing for her strong mind to betray it) she raised her hands to her eyes, and dropping on her knees hid her face in Mrs. Plunket's lap, and began to cry like a child.

The action was a thorough surprise to the mother. She could say nothing in her wonderment, as she leaned down towards her "dear child"—words she whispered just then. And with her cheek against Nora's head she waited till the tears would dry, thinking all the time, or trying to conjecture the cause of this grief, if such it was. Mrs. Plunket knew very well that Nora liked Oliver too well to be grieved at any good news concerning him. And surely this was good news. Was he not all but a brother to her and to Margie and to Aileen? Did not Nora, ever since her school-days at Kenhurst, always call herself when writing to Oliver, his devoted little sister: "*Toujours votre petite soeur dévouée*," as she would write it. Since her father's death she had used that phrase, when Oliver wrote to tell her that he would be her brother now—Oh, the dear child-

ish talk of his sympathetic letter!—and Nora and her little sisters accepted the loving adoption, though they needed not to be told of the loyal affection that the Plunkets had for them.

“And isn’t that splendid news about Oliver?” asked the mother, when Nora lifted up her face and wiped away the tears. “If there should be any tears I am the one to shed them.”

“But I have not been crying out of sorrow,” answered Nora brightly as she stood up; “I know that you will have the real sorrow to bear, Clare and Oliver leaving home. But tears can come from joy, you know, Mother Plunket,” she made her words ring out of her heart, “and if I was crying, it was on account of that—and because of a secret—my secret,” she added, smiling, “that I am going to tell you now, though I meant to tell you at Easter, time enough as you see.”

Mrs. Plunket did not wait to have the message conveyed to her in words. Out of many prudent surmises in the past, helped along doubtless by some confidential hints from Clare, she knew much about the desire that

was close to Nora's hopeful heart. And could she not read now in the joyous countenance that looked at her, could she not catch from the deep blue eyes and their vision of great worlds of holy beauty, a signal of the secret that lay in Nora's heart?

"The convent?" she asked, sure that the answer would be "yes." As indeed it was.

And then between tears and smiles, moments of child-like elation altering with silent minutes given to very serious moods as the prospect of parting ways came up, the entire story was retold when Clare and Oliver and the two children were brought up to the mother's room.

"We'll make believe it's school again," said Nora, as she drew forth the chairs into a straight line before the mother. And when the little audience, or rather the class, was seated, she added, folding her hands and looking as a child might do in school, "We'll call you Mother Plunket."

"Silence," said Mother Plunket, pretending to be stern when her pupils broke into applause at Nora's speech.

"Please, Mother Plunket," said Nora rising and making a courtesy, "please, Mother, I want to be excused, as I must go home to Molly."

And the schoolroom at a signal from the mistress, ended its session, then and there. But the venerable Madame strictly issued her orders: "To be prompt on next Tuesday evening beginning at dinner hour. It will be Mardi Gras," she said as if it were a great piece of erudition. "And before we enter upon the holy season of Lent, we shall have one great meeting of the class again. Ollie Plunket?" she called with a pretense at commanding.

"Present!" he quickly answered, and the children laughed heartily at his mimicry of a class function.

"Ollie Plunket," said the mother, "you must see that all of our friends come. And you will be allowed to whisper up and down the table what news we have been speaking about to-night."

"Bring lots of Indians," little Aileen called out, preferring the figure of the wigwam to

that of a classroom, howsoever extraordinary the recitals were to be.

“Bring the Scout and Pocahontas and Algonquin,” spoke up Margaret, as she stood to address Oliver. “And I will search the forest for Nokomis and Chicoutimi and Oweenee,” he answered, giving the Indian names of others in their circle of friendship. “And we’ll smoke the pipe of peace together, and give wampum to everybody and heap much love and—”

“Silence,” called the mother, as she led Nora towards the hallway.

“Don’t lose the warpath, Margie dear,” said Nora as she waved back to the children from the street.

CHAPTER XXIX

OTHER VIEWS OF BATTLE-GROUNDS

TOWARD the end of the Lenten season the Plunkets were seated in the mother's room, arranging some financial affairs that had to be considered in the anticipation of Clare's marriage. Mother Plunket—the name that the family circle called her now—was the principal speaker; all of her "motions" as a parliamentary phrase might say, were "seconded and unanimously passed." Now and then some very slight protest was raised against her generosity. But she went right on enumerating the various items, as if no interruption was even hinted at.

"And now we come to the remainder of that sum in the bank which father put there for Clare. Ollie, you took your half or nearly half; for the interest, even as you have noticed already, had increased the amount; now it is three thousand dollars."

"Clare is welcome to the luck in odd numbers, said Rory O'More," said Oliver, with a gesture that pretended he was a person above so small a consideration as the division of five hundred dollars.

"I'll buy you a ticket to the Indians when you start out as a missionary," answered Clare, bringing her hands together in a devotional attitude.

"Clare knows what Ollie did with his portion of that gift from father," said the mother. Both look and tone suggested that the other half should go in the same direction. "And perhaps Clare wishes to follow suit?"

"How may I?" came the ready answer.

"I have heard Shane Desmond and Ollie speak with enthusiasm—yes, you, Ollie," when he looked up and shook his head against the charge of having been enthusiastic on any subject but athletics; "you know that you said Glendalough wanted something for the college chapel. You remember that both Shane and you wished that you could make the gift to Glendalough."

"Quite right, I believe, Clare," Oliver bowed to his sister.

"Well, there is a chance for Clare to do something nice; something, too, that Shane would be glad to vote for, as well as yourself, Ollie."

"And if they vote, I'll carry out the resolution," said Clare, arising with playfulness to address "the Chair."

The resolution went into effect, not only unanimously but with great delight as well. And Easter Saturday, Father Campion was the recipient of a check for three thousand dollars with the following note from Clare:

"Dear Father:

"You know all the news of this household—all especially that concerns Nora and Oliver and myself. May I add that it is fixed now that Margaret and Aileen will come to live with mother, when we all go away in June. Diarmid has given his hearty consent, and Nora seems delighted with the prospect. And, of course, we are only too happy to think that the children will be with mother. Even when

they go away to school, which will be in September, mother will not lack company; I will be home then, and Molly hopes to take a house near ours, as Diarmid will dispose of the other when Nora goes away.

"You will find enclosed a check for three thousand dollars—a little gift from us for something (as mother calls it) at Glendalough. Shane and Oliver have already spoken with Father Rector on that point. I merely wish to have the presentation come through you. How we do continue to bother you!

"Oliver will go out to see you to-morrow to get the letters of introduction that you want us to take with us on our Southern trip. What a pleasure that will be—to meet your friends as we go in and out of the battle-fields where my dear father's regiment fought!

"Love from all of us.

"Your devoted child,

"CLARE."

And on Easter Monday the three travelers started forth. It was not their intention to

visit all the battle scenes that had been made memorable by the Irish Brigade. Their two weeks of furlough from duties at home would not suffice for so elaborate a tour. Acting upon Father Campion's advice they decided to visit Frederick first, and from there make little excursions to historic places. By "forced marches," to use the phrase as Oliver did, they could look in at Fredericksburg in Virginia, and pay their tribute of reverence to the famous Marye's Heights and all the country along by the Rappahannock.

When they arrived at Frederick Oliver conducted his party to the old novitiate with the first of the letters that Father Campion had given him, this one to the Rector there. While he stood talking with the Brother at the door, a venerable priest appeared, apparently blind, and making his way across to the parish church.

"Do you know Father McElroy?" asked the Brother, in a whisper, yet not low enough to escape the attention of the old priest.

Father McElroy stopped at the question and turned towards the visitors, though the

blank stare from beneath his shaggy eyebrows showed that it was only his sense of hearing that told him where the visitors stood.

"We are from Boston, Father," said Oliver brightly; and before he could go on to give names, the priest's aged hand lifted and made a motion to detain the speaker.

"Just a moment," Father McElroy said as the lines deepened in his marked face, and he showed that he was searching in the remote places of memory, "I think I recognize that voice." And he paused.

"Father often spoke of you, Father McElroy," said Oliver in a clear tone to make his voice do what it could towards the old priest's guess.

"Why, Colonel Plunket, Colonel Plunket had a voice like that when he rode over to Antietam!" the venerable head moved back and the countenance seemed to ask, "Am I right?" And Father McElroy with the phenomenal memory which everybody knew him to possess, said, "This is Colonel Plunket's son, is it not?"

"Yes, Father," came the response while the mother and Clare, astonished at this remarkable recognition, nodded their own delighted affirmation.

Straightway Oliver presented his mother and Clare; and what a half-hour of reminiscence followed in the little parlor! What new anecdotes they were told about their father's life in these parts during war times, from the day General Meagher addressed the Brigade in Georgetown till the famous charge on that "bloody Saturday" over on the slope behind Fredericksburg.

The Rector, to whom they were to present the letter, being away, the old blind priest called for a Brother to conduct them; and he went with the little party into the tower of the parish church, a place itself that had been employed for an observatory by Confederates and Federals in turn. And with great accuracy, feeling with his hands for angles in the towers that served as compass-points to him, the aged guide pointed out directions to famous sites, "off there, Harper's Ferry; and

see, these are the Catocin Mountains over here, Braddock's Heights where Stonewall Jackson fooled a general who was standing in this very tower—at least, so the story goes; and there is where the Monocacy flows, where a little battle fell out; you'll see the trenches to-morrow. And they say that is the Barbara Freitchie house—do you see? just a little to the left in there, yes—yes. But nobody here believes in poor Barbara; yet Stonewall was gallant enough and chivalrous enough for any poem that Whittier could make up.”

And so Father McElroy went on with talk that is important enough for no special historical purpose, but was more than historical reminiscence to the three that listened to it. It had the magic charm of entertaining the Plunkets to their hearts' content. For, at the parting of the ways as it were, during days when with closer affection than ever they sought to enrich their lives with the memories of their dear home, here was an old priest who lit up their affectionate memories with his intimate and hearty talk about their father.

That explains why they spent so great a portion of the time in Frederick. A hurried visit was given to Antietam; another to Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. And then back again to Frederick the mother and children came, their souls aglow with warm feelings over all that they had experienced; back they hastened to spend the last portion of the outing with dear old Father McElroy.

When their time came to return to the north, Mrs. Plunket, as she stood taking farewell of the priest, made known to him the proceedings that Clare and Oliver would be occupied with in June.

With lofty grandeur, as it may fittingly be termed (as indeed you would say if you could have seen the impressive manner this venerable old man could wear) Father McElroy spoke in his deep, solemn tones, "Now I remember that Colonel Plunket said to me one day, as he drew back towards Washington, 'If I get married, Father, when I return, and if God blesses me with a son, I hope he will wear your uniform, Father, not mine.' I remem-

ber the words well, Oliver, and how he added, 'Your warfare is for Christ and for our true country.' "

"Your blessing, Father?" Oliver followed his own question by kneeling at the feet of the aged priest.

Clare knelt, too, and asked for a blessing.

"May God bless you, Clare, and Shane Desmond forever," said the priest as his hands raised in benediction.

CHAPTER XXX

A LETTER FROM KENNETH SHANKEE

ABSENCE from Glendalough during the Easter holidays prevented Oliver Plunket from engaging in athletics during the spring season. Toward the end of May he took part in the baseball games; but foreseeing the busy month that June would be for him, preparing for the final examinations and graduation, he gave warning to the captain of the team that his last game at Glendalough would be on Memorial Day, the most interesting event of the second half of the year in athletic circles.

Georgetown was the adversary always on that afternoon; and Georgetown colors, uniting as they do the Blue and the Gray, suited admirably the social sentiment of that anniversary and the memories it spoke of. Partly for the reason that the teams represented the North and the South (whereas in truth, the chief at-

traction was a good game of baseball) it was customary to see in the vast throng of spectators many blue coated uniforms of men who had spent the morning in exercises at the soldiers' graves. Even the Governor and members of his Staff might be found in special seats near the Rector of Glendalough. There he was indeed on this Memorial Day, though it is not for the prestige of his presence that we look inquiringly into the grandstand. There farther back with Father Campion is a little group with whom we are better acquainted than with the most notable galaxy that the Capitol could send out to Glendalough. Nora and her sisters are there, and even Molly and Diarmid. Shane Desmond is at the side of the old priest, until Clare comes up with her mother and little Gwenny Shankee.

"Mother is entirely well now, thank you, Father," answered the child. "She almost came with us, Clare kept insisting so much. But she will be with us at Plunkets' this evening with Fridolin."

"And tell me, Gwenny dear," Father

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Campion had brought the child to a seat near him, "have you heard from Kenneth recently?"

"Only last night I received the first letter from him. Here it is." Her bright treble voice spoke with childish triumph; "mother told me to bring it and show it to you."

Father Campion took the letter, not to peruse it then, however; for the signal was given for the game to start. The band played the Georgetown songs and then the Glendalough songs; and with all the vivacious talking and hurrying hither and thither of excited spectators and players, and the turning of five thousand faces and the applauding of twice as many hands, and the cheering and alert expectancy that even seemed to surcharge the air, Father Campion could not attend to the letter.

"You go right ahead with the game, Gwenny," he whispered. "See that the umpires are fair, and be sure to cheer for the right side."

"Which is Ollie's side?" she called out in so

high a voice that all the onlookers in that section of the grandstand turned and smiled at the little girl, who was now startled by the movement she had made, and hung her head.

"He is for Georgetown," said a good-natured gentleman as he lifted his hat to Father Campion, "and we want you with us."

And it took at least five minutes to put Gwenny right on the point of Oliver's place in the game. Margie and Aileen were more apt, probably because they considered that Oliver was the entire game. But they were doomed to disappointment when the game was ended and Georgetown had won; and in true girlish fashion they vowed, Gwenny joining them in this, "We'll never speak to Georgetown again."

"But you must," said Clare as if she took them seriously. "Three of them are coming to our house this evening, and what will they do if you girls refuse to speak to them?"

And so they went on with the innocent banter as they came out the gate to the Glendalough lawns. Father Campion, who had a

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heart for such playful dialogues, did not take part in this. He withdrew from the throng, telling Shane that he would meet the group later near the entrance to the Hall. He wanted to show them the bells, which were now inscribed and ready to be placed aloft in the tower.

Father Campion, when he found himself alone, after the constant shower of greetings that fell upon him as he passed along, opened the letter, the first news that anybody had of Kenneth Shankee since he left the hospital in January.

*"Dearest Gwenny:—*This, as you see printed above, is the Trappist Monastery in Kentucky. I am not living in the *real* monastery, only in one of the outer sections reserved for lay people. I intend to stay here for a period of two years. Then I shall most probably move westward, perhaps to the agricultural districts in Canada. During my stay here I will learn everything about farming. For these holy monks know how to turn a barren hillside

or a dismal swamp into the most flourishing garden.

"That is one reason I have in staying here so long. It would not become me to speak of other benefits that I shall receive. Perhaps Father Campion will tell mother something of that feature of the life here.

"And before I end this, let me ask you, Gwenny dear, if you know that Oliver Plunket saved my life on Christmas eve, and afterwards nursed me at the hospital? Perhaps you know this. As you do now, you will see that he has your love.

"Your loving brother,

"KEN.

"P. S. You have my address now; a letter from Gwenny will always be a delightful whisper in the great silence here."

It was that letter which first led the Shankees to inquire into the history of that memorable Christmas eve, when Oliver Plunket had rushed into their house almost frozen in his wet clothes, after he had rescued Kenneth

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from the Charles River. He had never hinted at the aftermath—the devoted way in which he attended to Kenneth during two weeks at the hospital, and afterward furnished him with the means to start upon a new career.

And that night after the ball game between Georgetown and Glendalough, when Mrs. Shankee came to Oliver's house, she called him aside from the merry party in the parlor. When they were alone in the little library room, she could not restrain her tears, as she put her arms about the young man. She was not ashamed to betray the emotions of a new heart that was hers now. "What a horrible dream I have been living, Oliver, what a ghastly nightmare! What a mercy is the awakening!" Then taking his hands she looked calmly at him. "You have not merely saved his life and saved his soul for a greater life, but you have helped to save me as well, save me from my own foolishness, Oliver, Oliver—God bless you and the life ahead of you."

They sat down and talked quietly, Mrs. Shankee telling Oliver all that she herself was

allowed to learn from Father Campion about the journey that Kenneth made in the country around Frederick during that wintry tramp. Kenneth himself had urged the priest, the last morning in the novitiate parlor, to tell his mother of that journey, especially over the historic roads, and the effect it had upon him.

"And perhaps in the autumn," Mrs. Shankee said as they arose and moved out to join the merry party in the other rooms, "perhaps we shall take a trip to Kentucky to tell Kenneth that his mother is well again, entirely well. Gwenny will go to Kenhurst with Margie and Aileen. But I want her to come with us to Kentucky. It will please Kenneth to see her again."

CHAPTER XXXI

MUSIC

FOR a day so late in June, and taking into consideration the fact that the scholastic year was ended and was even six days ago a thing of the past, Glendalough seemed more than ordinarily preoccupied with the anticipation of some notable occurrence. The great "commencement" exercises—great most in this, that Oliver Plunket was valedictorian on the occasion—had taken place a week ago, and were followed by that profound silence which, whether of fact or of fancy, seems to hang about a college when the valedictions of the last lingering groups have been made. Fancy is perhaps the more active author of the seeming silence and sad stillness; for in point of fact, there is noise enough during the ensuing days when with bustling activity a score of servants rush about the rooms and corridors to put them into respectable looks for

the long summer repose until September.

It was not, however, an activity of this nature that now, this all but last day of June, drove off the reign of silence from the environs of Glendalough. Reasons far more academic, though the main reason was not an academic one, would account for the extraordinary appearance of the campus and halls. Seniors in cap and gown were strolling about; and young ladies in pretty costumes, whose technical description can be made only by tradespeople or by the young ladies themselves, dresses that fitted more aptly into the scene of light and shade upon the lawn than did the variegated shrubs. Men in tall hats and frock coats went about with great airs of leisureness and dignity, as if to suggest that they wanted the occasion to bear the homage of their most perfect presence; and other men were amongst them in plain every-day clothes, as if they intended to speed back to the expectant business world once the ceremony was terminated. And finally, a spectator could not fail to notice a few military uniforms, not of some shining

school brigade to ornament a social hour, but of worthy old veterans, whose venerable faces wore well the aureole of white locks, those faces that were vigorous with youth and bravery when they went up Marye's Heights in Fredericksburg with Clare Plunket's father. And to do respect to the daughter of that man these old soldiers of the Brigade had put on their parade uniforms and come out to Glendalough this very morning.

Only two costumes of black—the uniform of other soldiers—were to be observed so early in the day. One was Father Campion's, and he stood upon the porch of the Faculty House, his hand against a column, in the very attitude he took nearly a year ago when Nora and Oliver had gone from a memorable visit; when he waited there, wondering which way the two roads might turn, wondering still as he went in out of the storm that evening, never suspecting that in one short year he would see them take farewell of Glendalough, going out of the little chapel arm in arm, under the joyous pealing of the bells.

The other black-robe was old Brother Neville. His first impulse, as he came down by the hedge, was to go forward to his old soldier comrades and fill out a half hour with genial reminiscences. But in his humble way he preferred to stay apart from the distinguished gathering, though a few of the college men in their flowing robes glided over to him to hear again some of his quaint bits of Latin and Gaelic; and at an opportune time he moved down to a hidden seat behind a copse.

"It's a good half hour, they have yet to wait," he said to himself. "After the ceremony I must say a word to Oliver before he goes."

Mention of Oliver's name reminded him of a clipping that he had made from the newspaper after the graduation exercises, and he drew it from his pocket. The contents of the excerpt had to do with an account of some of the addresses delivered on "commencement" night.

"Music?" asked the old Brother, looking quizzically, "what a queer subject?" It was

the theme that Oliver had taken. "I did not know that Oliver was musically inclined, though I know well his father could play a hornpipe on any fife that was ever made." And an innocent chuckle followed that observation.

As the Brother read down the little paragraphs he could see that they contained very little erudition, and, if they were reported accurately, very little attempt at erudition either on the history or the philosophy of music. It was clear that Oliver had taken a theme not to treat it directly, but, with something of his father's instinct for journalistic captions, to use a topic as a merchant may use a peg in his shopwindow, to hang up some worthy article for the attention of those who care to examine it.

Only a few preliminary remarks by way of an exordium concerned themselves directly with the topic of music. In a familiar, off-hand way, Oliver related to the audience (what every audience knows quite well) the manoeuvres an orchestra must go through before

it starts in to play its program; how the various sections of the orchestra, its quartettes of brass and reeds and strings must bring their instruments into true pitch, international or concert pitch, whichever it may be. Having done that, the body of musicians may proceed to discourse their sweet harmonies: whereas hideous discord and torturing caterwauling is the inevitable result when the proper relations to the prescribed pitch are neglected.

With that much said upon words and facts that pertained to music the young speaker launched into his proper subject—a few considerations on the philosophy of life. After the manner of academic speeches Oliver did not pretend to sound the ultimate depths of his vast theme. And howsoever extensively he did go into his considerations, the newspaper did not make much “copy” out of it.

“Plunket defines joy,” was what a sub-caption announced. And the Brother read it, though he did not know that Oliver was but repeating an old definition out of a mediaeval

scholastic, "Joy is the harmony of all our faculties with the will of God."

People who were in the audience that evening and cared to listen to the young speaker's ardent amplification of this definition will not easily forget the apt use that was made of the analysis of that sentence. What, he asked, and then he examined, is the root of a widespread discontent, of a growing pessimism, of a still wider reach of mental and moral lassitude throughout the country? What? but that men who suffer this discontent and this pessimism are out of tune with the prime note of life, with that rule which must guide every effort of man's mind and heart. How simple a remedy it was, the speaker went on to say in his equally simple language. How readily he quoted, even from profane authors, the ample testimony of the world of men who had borne witness to the truth that God's will is the law of life, the harmonious keynote to all endeavor that yearns for peace and joy. Every faculty of man, he said, every pulse-beat of his heart and every thought of his mind must be brought

into true relation with that divine will.

And then turning to the valedictory portion of his address he quoted Dante's great line, "In His will is our peace."

As Brother Neville meditated on all this, filling in from his own fancy what he thought the newspaper report eliminated, he easily brought himself to feel that these were sentiments out of Oliver's best heart—what nobody wishes to gainsay who knew Oliver. "It has the ring of Colonel Plunket himself," said the old Brother musingly. And doubtless he was going to prove it, by repeating from his stock of remembered speeches some similar thoughts that he had read from Colonel Plunket's pen in editorial days.

But a great and unaccustomed sound put an end to his musings. For the first time since the bells had been set in the tower—the three bells that came to Glendalough through Clare Plunket's wedding gift—the three new bells aloft in the tower rang out and flooded the campus with such a joy of sound that every hedge and tree and lawn seemed to vibrate

with ecstasy. For a few moments the voices of all the people fell down into silence; but quickly upon the pealing of the bells something like a glad cheer rose out of the renewed conversations. The seniors of Glendalough, classmates of Oliver, raised the academic caps and held them as if for a salute to some object approaching on the driveway—the carriages coming with the bridal party. And all the assembled spectators filed slowly into the chapel, where they saw, as they came slowly in, the pastor of Clare's parish church and Father Campion waiting in the sanctuary. Near them, acting as a master of ceremonies, was Nora's brother, Gerald, who had recently taken his vows in the novitiate, and received permission to come home to see Nora before she should enter the convent.

Still the three great bells pealed forth, as the carriages halted to put down their happy groups.

"There's music," said the old Brother Neville to himself, though he was not referring to the attuned bells so much as to the young

people upon whom he had fixed his gaze. And then he added, "Who ever thought to hear wedding bells at Glendalough?"

Aiming at no ostentation, for Clare had insisted, even as her mother and Oliver desired, upon a simple ceremony, the bridal group entered the church. It requires not to be told that in the very first seat was Mrs. Plunket with her faithful friends, Diarmid and Molly, and directly behind them were Mrs. Shankee and Fridolin; nor that three little girls, acting in some capacity as flower-bearers, were Margaret and Aileen Gomez and Gwenny Shankee; nor finally that the bridesmaid was Eleonora Gomez, and that Oliver Plunket was, as Brother Neville termed him, "best man to Shane Desmond."

After the Mass and the marriage, the bells pealed forth again their jubilant pæan as the bridal group went down from the altar. Father Campion, stepping from the sanctuary, fixed his eyes, so full of joy now, upon Nora and Oliver as they walked down the aisle together.

"Father Campion, Father Campion," he heard a bright treble voice call to him as he appeared on the chapel steps.

He bowed graciously to little Margaret, asking, "What is it, dear?"

"May we call these the Wedding Bells of Glendalough?" and she turned towards her two companions meaning that they also asked the question.

"We must," he answered with a smile, and he looked out upon the pleasant group of faces that were in hearing of the child's unconventional question; "we must call them the Wedding Bells of Glendalough at least to-day."

Oliver, having escorted his mother and Nora to the carriage, waited to converse with some of his classmates and with the old soldier friends of his father. While he was talking with them, Father Campion took farewell of Nora and of Mrs. Plunket, and then interested himself with the children. Oliver at length recognized an inquiring look upon old Brother Neville's face and hastened over to the kind, holy man.

"May you have lots of true music in your life, Oliver," the old man whispered with some emotion. "And when do you leave us?"

"About the first of August, Brother," came the gentle answer. "I will come out to see you for a whole afternoon before I go. Tomorrow we are going to our summer home in Manchester, only a few miles away, Brother," he spoke assuring words to the old man who seemed to doubt that he would ever meet his young friend again. "I promise you that I will come out for a full afternoon."

The three little girls had drawn over to Oliver, as he was taking the old Brother's hand and saying his adieu. "I have some deep-sea fish down there that I must feed, and they must be wondering what has kept me away so long. Almost a year since I used to throw bits of food to them every morning."

"And bring some peanuts," whispered Margaret up to him, as she looked abashed before the old Brother. "Nora may want to bring some squirrels in to live near us; and she knows

how to make them come far in from the forests."

"Come, Margie, we must be going," was Oliver's answer, as he took her hand. "Nora will be leaving home for the convent next week, you know, dear, and she cannot take time to capture pretty squirrels."

"Good-by, Father Campion," called out the children. And when the kindly old priest waved to them, and then pointed his hand towards the bells in the tower, they added in chorus, "Good-by, Wedding Bells of Glendalough."

THE END

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SUGAR-CAMP AND AFTER. SPALDING.	0 85
SUMMER AT WOODVILLE. SADLIER.	0 45
TALES AND LEGENDS OF THE MIDDLE AGES. COPELLA.	0 75
TALISMAN, THE. SADLIER.	0 60
TAMING OF POLLY. DORSEY.	0 85
THAT FOOTBALL GAME. FINN.	0 85
THREE GIRLS AND ESPECIALLY ONE. TAGGART.	0 45
THREE LITTLE KINGS. GIEHRL.	0 25
TOLD IN THE TWILIGHT. MOTHER SALOME.	0 85
TOM LOSELY: BOY. COPUS.	0 85
TOM'S LUCK-POT. WAGGAMAN.	0 45
TOM PLAYFAIR. FINN.	0 85
TOORALLADDY. WALSH.	0 45
TRANSPLANTING OF TESSIE. WAGGAMAN.	0 60
TREASURE OF NUGGET MOUNTAIN. TAGGART.	0 85
TWO LITTLE GIRLS. MACK.	0 45
VIOLIN MAKER, THE. SCHACHING.	0 45
WAGER OF GERALD O'ROURKE. Play adapted from a story by Father Finn.	0 35
WAYWARD WINIFRED. SADLIER.	0 85
WINNETOU THE APACHE KNIGHT. TAGGART.	0 85
WITCH OF RIDINGDALE. BEARNE.	0 85
WRONGFULLY ACCUSED. HERCHENBACH.	0 45
YOUNG COLOR GUARD. BONESTEEL.	0 45

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